



On Top Of The News



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INSIDE TODAY

WORLD NEWS

PREMIER ASSAULT



In This image made available by the Italian Premier's office shows Massimo Tartaglia, 42, who Italian police said was suspected of punching Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi in the face at the end of a rally in Milan, Italy on Sunday Dec. 13, 2009.

Read more on Page A7

SPORTS NEWS

RECORD RUN



An Indianapolis Colts fans holds up a sign late in the fourth quarter during an NFL football game between the Colts and the Denver Broncos in Indianapolis, Sunday, Dec. 13, 2009. Indianapolis won 28-16.

Read more on Page A12

SECTION B

Local News

1

Classifieds

12

Latino

15

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Monday, December 14, 2009

Senate sends \$1.1 trillion spending bill to Obama



Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., speaks at a news conference on Capitol Hill as Sens. Judd Gregg, R-N.H., George LeMieux, R-Fla., and Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, listen in Washington, Saturday, Dec. 12, 2009.

Associated Press
Read Page 4

The push for 350: Contradictions and carbon levels



Danish police arrest demonstrators in Copenhagen Sunday Dec. 13, 2009. The largest and most important U.N. climate change conference is underway in Copenhagen, aiming to secure an agreement on how to protect the world from calamitous global warming.

Associated Press

SETH BORENSTEIN

AP Science Writer

COPENHAGEN (AP) — As police cracked down on climate protesters, church bells tolled 350 times Sunday to impress on the U.N. global warming conference a number that is gaining a following, but is also awash in contradictions.



Houston Mayor-elect Annise Parker speaks at a press conference at the Hilton Americas Hotel in downtown Houston Sunday, Dec. 13, 2009 in Houston. Parker addressed a number of topics.

Associated Press

Gay mayor-elect: Victory shows Houston's diversity

By MONICA RHOR

Associated Press Writer

HOUSTON — The day after Houston voters chose Annise Parker to become the city's first openly gay mayor, she did as she had throughout a contentious, hard-fought campaign: focused on the brick-and-mortar realities of running the country's fourth largest city.

Continued on Page 3

Conference negotiators went behind closed doors in talks to pin down an elusive new pact on climate, talks in which the figure 350 looms as a goal for true believers, but one that appears impossible based on progress so far.

It refers to 350 parts per million of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, the highest concentration that some leading scientists say the world can handle without sparking dangerous climate effects. "It's the most important number in the world," said Bill McKibben, founder of the environmental activist group 350.org. "It's the line between habitability on this planet and a really, really desolate future."

Not everyone buys into that. But an entire environmental group has sprung up around the number, pushing 350 as a goal, sporting it on T-shirts and flags waved by throngs of protesters that marched to the conference center over the weekend.

Continued on Page 6





Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., speaks at a news conference on Capitol Hill as Sens. Judd Gregg, R-N.H., George LeMieux, R-Fla., and Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, listen in Washington, Saturday, Dec. 12, 2009.

Associated Press

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Medicare buy-in plan runs into Senate resistance

By CALVIN WOODWARD

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — A plan to let people as young as 55 buy into Medicare, heralded as a breakthrough in the Senate's health care debate, ran into resistance Sunday from lawmakers who can make or break Democrats' efforts to reshape the nation's health insurance system.

Independent Sen. Joe Lieberman of Connecticut declared the early Medicare buy-in a bad deal for taxpayers and the deficit. He pleaded with Democrats to start subtracting expensive proposals from the overhaul, saying, "We don't need to keep adding onto the back of this horse or we're going to break the horse's back and get nothing done."

Lieberman conveyed similar sentiments to Majority Leader Harry Reid in a private meeting later in the day.

Government accountants are poring over the latest compromise proposals to see how much they would cost, and some lawmakers are reserving judgment until that plays out this week. "The whole reason we're doing this bill is to bring down cost, first for the American people in health care, and secondly for the deficit," said Democratic Sen. Claire McCaskill of Missouri. "So until we get

the numbers back from the Congressional Budget Office, we're all on hold."

Asked if she would vote against the bill if it raised health care costs overall, she said, "Absolutely."

In the meantime, only a few moderates have come out against the Medicare plan. But in a legislative struggle that is a game of inches, Democrats need all 60 votes in their caucus, and they don't yet have them.

"I think it's going to pass out of the Senate before Christmas," President Barack Obama told CBS' "60 Minutes" in an interview airing Sunday night. Lieberman said there was a chance, if Democrats "bring in some Republicans who are open-minded."

But Senate GOP leader Mitch McConnell said no way: "With the American people as overwhelming opposed to this bill as they are, for the Democrats to basically arrogantly take the position that we're going to ignore public opinion and jam this through before Christmas, I think that's really a stretch," said McConnell, R-Ky.

The early Medicare buy-in was part of a compromise reached last week when Senate Democrats dropped the idea of setting up a federal health insurance plan to compete with private insurers. Many

Democrats who had favored that public option only grudgingly let it go, in return embracing the Medicare proposal as an appealing way to help people 55 to 64 — a group often vulnerable to losing employer-based health insurance when it's needed the most.

Under the compromise, private nonprofit plans overseen by the federal government would be offered in the marketplace.

Sen. Jay Rockefeller, D-W.Va., said he was working with Lieberman and others on controlling Medicare costs, and he voiced confidence fellow Democrats can get past their divisions. Party leaders, resuming the debate Sunday, are pushing hard to finish the Senate overhaul legislation before Christmas and to begin negotiations with the House, which has passed its plan.

But while saying "I want to be a friend of the process," Sen. Ben Nelson, D-Neb., sounded distinctly down on the Medicare proposal.

"I'm concerned that it's the forerunner of single-payer — the ultimate single-payer plan, maybe even more directly than the public option," he said. By single-payer, he meant national health insurance run by Washington.

Nelson already says he won't support the bill unless fellow Democrats establish a firewall to ensure no public money goes toward abortion coverage.

Lieberman was a firm opponent of the bill's original plan for a public insurance option. Even with it out, he said he would find it hard to vote for the bill if it contains the Medicare buy-in as written. "The opposition to it has been growing as the week has gone on," he said. Lieberman, Nelson, McConnell and Rockefeller spoke on CBS' "Face the Nation." McCaskill was on "Fox News Sunday." □

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GAY MAYOR ELECT

Continued from Front Page

Parker told a Sunday press conference about her transition team, her plans to change the running of the Houston Police Department and the financial constraints faced by the city.

Then, she paused to reflect on the significance of the election, which made Houston the largest U.S. city to elect an openly gay mayor.

"It's a historic election for my community, and I believe an election that will change some people's minds about the city of Houston," said Parker, 53. "It's a diverse, international city that welcomes everyone."

Parker, who began her political career as a gay activist, rose through the ranks of local politics to serve first on city council, then as city controller.

"I realize that I'm a role model, but I've been a role model for my community for 30 years," she said. "It's part of who I am, and I believe it makes me a better representative for the city of Houston."

Parker defeated former city attorney Gene Locke, 61, with 53.6 percent of the vote Saturday in a race that had a turnout of only 16.5 percent. Locke had hoped to become the city's second black mayor.

A little more than 152,000 residents turned out to cast ballots in the city, which has a population of 2.2 million. Of those voters, 81,743 chose Parker — some 11,000 more than voted for Locke. About 60,000 residents identify themselves as gay or lesbian.

A call to Locke's campaign was not immediately returned.

Parker's victory comes after several setbacks for

gay rights activists. New York lawmakers earlier this month rejected a bill that would have made their state the sixth to allow marriage between same-sex couples. In November, Maine voters repealed the Legislature's passage of a state law allowing same-sex marriage there.

Several smaller U.S. cities, including Portland, Ore., Providence, R.I., and Cambridge, Mass., have openly gay mayors.

Parker has not made a secret or an issue of her sexual orientation during this campaign or any of her previous runs for city office. Nevertheless, it became the focus of the election race after anti-gay activists and conservative religious groups endorsed Locke and sent out mailers condemning Parker's "homosexual behavior." The race was also closely watched by gay and lesbian rights organizations around the country, which endorsed Parker, contributed money to her campaign and staged get-out-the-vote phone banks. "We think Annise Parker will be a fantastic mayor for Houston, and the increased visibility that comes with that would help our community," said Jenna Lowenstein, communications director for the Stonewall Democrats, a national gay and lesbian political organization.

On Sunday, a glowing Parker dismissed the attacks by the anti-gay activists, saying they have been waging "the same ugly divisive campaigns attacking my community for a long time."

"I'm proud that the city of Houston has grown and matured, even though they have not," said Parker, who said she celebrated her victory with a bubble bath.

Parker's term starts Jan. 1. □

Aircrafts search for two climbers in Oregon

TIM FOUGHT

Associated Press Writer

GOVERNMENT CAMP, Oregon (AP) — A cloud bank hugging the flanks of Mount Hood frustrated the air search for two missing climbers on Sunday, a day after their companion was found dead on a glacier on Oregon's highest mountain.

Rescuers had to bring in a helicopter and airplanes to conduct the search because new snow had created avalanche dangers for crews working on foot.

Skies had cleared Sunday morning, but the weather worsened again and mountain became shrouded by a low

cloud during the afternoon. The search aircraft — a helicopter and a fixed-wing airplane — returned to their bases.

The three climbers — 26-year-old Luke T. Gullberg, 24-year-old Anthony Vietti and 29-year-old Katie Nolan — had begun their ascent on the west side of the mountain about 1 a.m. Friday and were due back that afternoon, but failed to return.

On Saturday, crews found Gullberg's body on the glacier at the 9,000-feet (2,750-meters) level.

His equipment also was found scattered around the glacier, including a camera

with at least 20 photos of the climbers. Crews have looked over the photos for landmarks and other clues to the location of the two missing climbers.

After eight inches (20 centimeters) of snow fell on the 11,249-foot (3,400-meter) mountain overnight, avalanche dangers in the higher elevations Sunday made a rescue mission on foot too risky.

Officials have not given up hope that Nolan and Vietti could still be found alive, calling them experienced climbers.

Mount Hood is a popular site among climbers in the United States. □



Houston Mayor-elect Annise Parker, right, celebrates her runoff election victory with partner Kathy Hubbard, left, at a campaign party Saturday, Dec. 12, 2009 in Houston. Parker defeated former city attorney Gene Locke making Houston the largest U.S. city to elect an openly gay mayor.

Associated Press

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Senate sends \$1.1 trillion spending bill to Obama



Sen. Roland Burris, D-Ill., and Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., right, arrive for the vote on the \$1.1 trillion spending bill on Capitol Hill in Washington, Sunday, Dec. 13, 2009.

Associated Press

JIM ABRAMS

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate on Sunday passed a

\$1.1 trillion spending bill with increased budgets for vast areas of the federal government including health, education, law enforcement and veterans' programs. The 1,000-page-plus package, one of the last essential chores of Congress this year, passed 57-35 and now goes to President Barack Obama for his signature.

The weekend action underlined the legislative crush faced by Congress as it tries to wind up the year. After the vote, the Senate immediately returned to debate on health care legislation that has consumed its time and energy for weeks. Senate Democrats hope to reach a consensus in the coming days on Obama's chief domestic priority.

The spending bill combines six of the 12 annual appropriation bills for the 2010 budget year that began on Oct. 1. Obama has signed into law five others.

The final one, a \$626 billion defense bill, will be used as the base bill for another catch-all package of measures that Congress must deal with in the coming days. Those include action to raise the \$12.1 trillion debt ceiling and proposals to stimulate the job market.

The spending bill passed Sunday includes \$447 billion for departments' operating budgets and about \$650 billion in mandatory payments for federal benefit programs such as Medicare and Medicaid, which provide health care benefits to the elderly, disabled and poor. Those programs under immediate control of Congress would see increases of about 10 percent.

The FBI gets \$7.9 billion, a

\$680 million increase over 2009; the Veterans Health Administration budget goes from \$41 billion to \$45.1 billion; the National Institutes of Health receives \$31 billion, a \$692 million increase.

All but three Democrats voted for the bill, while all but three Republicans opposed it.

Democrats said the spending was critical to meet the needs of a recession-battered economy. "Every bill that is passed, every project that is funded and every job that is created helps America take another step forward on the road of economic recovery," Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said after the vote.

Republicans decried what they called out-of control spending and pointed to an estimated \$3.9 billion in the bill for more than 5,000 local projects sought by individual lawmakers from both parties.

The Citizens Against Government Waste said those projects included construction of a county farmer's market in Kentucky, renovation of a historic theater in New York and restoration of a mill in Rhode Island.

Arizona Republican Sen. John McCain, a longtime critic of such projects, said it was "shameful" that so many had found their way into the legislation. Most Americans, he said, were watching football and not the Senate debate, adding, "If they knew what we are about to pass"

The legislation also contains numerous items not directly related to spending. It provides help for auto dealers facing closure, ends a ban on funding by the District of Columbia government for abortions and allows the district to permit medical marijuana,

lets Amtrak passengers carry unloaded handguns in their checked baggage and permits detainees held at Guantanamo Bay to be transferred to the United States to stand trial, but not to be released.

The bill also approves a 2 percent pay increase for federal workers.

With the Senate concentrating on health care, attention on the upcoming jobs plan shifts to the House.

The defense bill that will be the basis for the package normally enjoys wide bipartisan support, but Republicans, and some fiscally conservative Democrats, are unhappy with the prospect of another jolt of deficit-swelling spending.

Proposals to put people back to work include tax breaks for new company hires, small business tax breaks, public works spending and federal aid to states.

Congress is also likely to extend measures, included in the \$787 billion stimulus act last February, that provide jobless payments and health insurance subsidies for the unemployed.

Congress must soon raise the debt ceiling, now at \$12.1 trillion, so the Treasury can continue to borrow, and Democratic leaders are eyeing a new figure close to \$14 trillion, pushing the issue past next November's election.

But a bipartisan group in the Senate says a higher ceiling should be tied to creation of a task force on deficit reduction, and House Democratic moderates say their votes could depend on winning a "pay-as-you-go" law requiring that new tax cuts or spending programs don't add to the deficit. □

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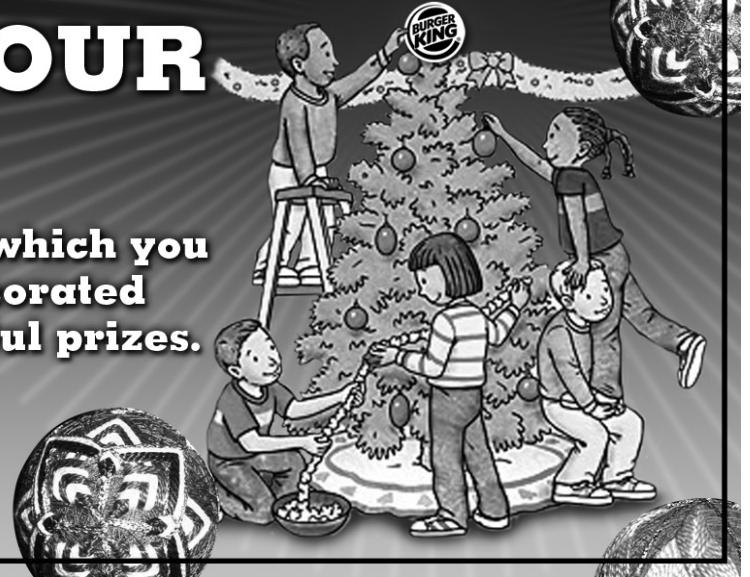
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California rains ending, no major mudslides reported

CHRISTOPHER WEBER

Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) —

Heavy rain tapered off, skies cleared and residents of the Los Angeles area foothills started returning home Sunday, a day after they fled because of fears that heavy rains would cause mudslides. Public works and fire department officials drove through the wildfire-scarred neighborhoods early Sunday and determined that it was safe for the residents of the 44 evacuated homes to return, said Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Deputy Lillian Peck.

Fifteen patrol vehicles continued to make rounds in burn areas Sunday, scanning the hillsides for potential mudslides, said the Los Angeles Fire Department's Brian Humphrey.

Foothill areas below the burned sections of the Angeles National Forest had been barricaded with sandbags and concrete barriers. Ground in recently burned areas has little ability to absorb rain, and the instant runoff during heavy rains can carry with it ash, mud, boulders and vegetation.

Mudslides and debris closed parts of a 12-mile (19-kilometer) stretch of the Angeles Crest Highway just north of Los Angeles, leaving 90 vehicles stranded for a time. No injuries were reported. The road remained closed Sunday.

Forecasters said some rain



Rock debris blocks the roadway on La Presa Drive in the Hollywood Hills section of Los Angeles, Saturday, Dec. 12, 2009. Los Angeles Fire Department spokesman said downpours Saturday weakened the ground next to a home near the Hollywood Bowl and city building inspectors have put a red tag on the house, declaring the structure uninhabitable. No injuries are reported.

Associated Press

was lingering Sunday along the Central Coast but most of the state would see dry weather through midweek. Rainfall totals in the wildfire burn areas were less than meteorologists had feared. Just under four inches () fell above Arcadia in a 24 hour period ending Sunday and Mount Wilson got about 4.65 inches, according to unofficial National Weather Service reports.

About 16,000 utility customers throughout Southern California were sporadically without electricity, mostly because of downed branches crashing onto power lines. While problems in the lowlands eased, heavy snow in California's mountains made driving difficult.

Snows between 8 and 16 inches (20 and 40 centimeters) fell above 6,000 feet (1,800 meters) in the Southern

California mountains. Winds blew at 25 to 35 mph (40 to 56 kph).

George Cline, a National Weather Service forecaster in Sacramento, expected the storm to bring an inch (2.5 centimeters) of rain to the Central Valley, with wind gusts up to 60 mph (96 kph). Gusts up to 90 mph (145 kph) were expected on mountain ridges.

The National Weather Service said another storm system will bring more heavy rain to Northern California late Tuesday and early Wednesday.

The new snow in the mountains is expected to give an early jump to building the snowpack, which is key to the region's water supply. But forecasters say the snow would also bring avalanche danger to the backcountry. □

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Archbishop Desmond Tutu, left, gestures with UN Climate Chief Yvo de Boer after handing him over a count down clock, as both appear on stage in the center of Copenhagen, Denmark, Sunday Dec. 13, 2009. Over a over half a million signatures and pledges where collected to stop the climate change.

CARBON LEVELS

Continued from Front Page

About 100 nations at the U.N. climate summit have signed on to the idea of heading for 350. Actually, the world has lived with more than 350 for a while.

The last time the Earth had 350 ppm of carbon dioxide in the air was a generation ago, in the fall of 1989. This year CO₂ pushed over the 390 level. When scientists started

Associated Press
measuring carbon dioxide in 1958 it was 315. Since the atmosphere passed the 350 level, ice sheets have been melting and other dramatic changes have been happening. Prominent scientists — notably NASA's James Hansen, one of the earliest to warn about global warming, and Rajendra Pachauri, head of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change — have said 350 is the only safe level

of carbon dioxide in the air. Still, many economists, political leaders, and even some scientists believe that the worst effects of global warming can be avoided even with less stringent actions. But there is general agreement among negotiators and climate scientists that continued global warming will lead to dramatic changes that mean more widespread drought in some regions, greater flooding along coastlines, stronger storms and the loss of species.

On Sunday, hundreds of churches around the world had signed up to ring bells at 3:50 p.m. in their respective time zones. "It was an incredibly powerful moment and to know that there are bells ringing all over Europe, up to Greenland, down into the south Pacific and every corner of the planet," McKibben said moments after the bells stopped ringing in Copenhagen.

As they tolled, more than 40 government environment

chiefs and other high-level negotiators were meeting at the Danish Foreign Ministry. They were trying to bridge the gap between their positions in informal talks before the second and last week of negotiations gets under way. The week will end with the arrival of President Barack Obama and more than 100 other national leaders for the final hours of negotiation.

Sharp divisions remain between rich and poor countries on greenhouse emissions cuts and financing for developing nations to deal with climate change and shift to cleaner energy. "I think there was recognition around the table of the urgency of what we need to achieve in the coming days," Britain's Climate Change Secretary Ed Miliband said after Sunday's talks. "I think there needs to be more movement from everyone, more imagination, and I think we will all be striving for that."

Australia's Climate Change

Minister Penny Wong also said a lot of work remains to be done.

"It's going to be tough to get an agreement by Friday but that's what we have to do," she told a news conference.

According to participants, the closed-door consultations focused on about a half-dozen plans on financing for poor countries to deal with climate change. One joint proposal by Mexico and Norway calls for a "Green Fund" for climate financing, starting with \$10 billion a year in 2013, and increasing to \$30 billion to \$40 billion a year by 2020

Separately, a proposal aimed at saving the world's tropical forests suffered a setback Sunday, when negotiators ditched plans for faster action on the problem because of concerns that rich countries aren't willing to finance the plan. A deal on deforestation — a sizable global warming factor — is considered a key component of the larger pact.

For a second day in a row, police cracked down on climate activists marching through the Danish capital. More than 200 were detained as police stopped an unauthorized demonstration headed toward the city's harbor and carried out a security check of some of the participants.

Meanwhile, nearly all of the 1,000 detained on Saturday — from Europe, Africa, Asia, and the U.S. — were released without charges. Thirteen of them were arraigned in court and faced preliminary charges of assaulting police or were let off with a warning for wearing masks, which are outlawed during demonstrations in Denmark, or carrying box-cutters or other sharp objects.

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Attacker hurls statuette, bloodies Berlusconi face

FRANCES D'EMILIO

Associated Press Writer

ROME (AP) — An attacker hurled a statuette at Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi, striking the leader in the face at the end of a rally Sunday and leaving the stunned 73-year-old media mogul with a broken nose and bloodied mouth.

Police said the 42-year-old man accused of attacking Berlusconi as he signed autographs in Milan was immediately taken into custody. The Italian leader was rushed to a hospital where he was being held overnight. The attack occurred at a time when Berlusconi, one of Italy's wealthiest men, is embroiled in a sex scandal, a divorce case with his wife and public protests demanding his resignation.

TV showed the stunned leader with blood under his nose, on his mouth and under one eye as he was lifted to his feet by aides after Sunday's attack. He was hustled into the back of a car, but he immediately got out, apparently to show he was not badly injured.

But Berlusconi suffered a "small fracture" of the nose, two broken teeth and an injury to the inside and outside of his lip, said Paolo Klun, chief spokesman for Milan's San

Raffaele Hospital.

"He wanted to go home right away, but he is being held as a precaution" for overnight observation, Klun said. The premier suffered "a significant bruising trauma from this blunt instrument that was hurled at him."

Police first said it appeared the assailant had punched Berlusconi in the face while clutching a souvenir statue of Milan's Duomo, or cathedral with gargoyles that symbolizes the city. But state TV later showed a video, somewhat blurry, of what appeared to be the attacker's hand coming close to Berlusconi's face while holding the statue, then letting go of the object at the last minute as it hit the premier's face.

Berlusconi was "very shaken and demoralized," Klun said. "He didn't understand very well what happened to him." Immediately after the attack, the premier, after getting out of the car and without saying a word, was pulled back into the vehicle by bodyguards.

The attack occurred after Berlusconi had just finished delivering a long, vigorous speech at the rally to thousands of applauding supporters from his Freedom People party in the square outside the cathedral at about 6:30 p.m.

Officials at Milan's police headquarters said they didn't immediately know what the miniature Duomo statue was made of.

Berlusconi's spokesman, speaking by telephone from the emergency room from San Raffaele hospital where the premier was taken, told Sky TG24 TV that doctors had decided to keep Berlusconi in the hospital overnight for observation. "We'll see what the doctors say tomorrow morning," spokesman Paolo Bonaiuti told Sky. The exams of his jaw area included a CT scan, Bonaiuti said.

Police identified the man they were questioning as Massimo Tartaglia, 42. They said Tartaglia didn't have any criminal record but had suffered psychological problems in the past.

Defense Minister Ignazio La Russa told reporters he ran to help police hustle the man away from the scene of the attack "to keep him from a possible lynching from the crowd." The assailant "was a man who had mixed in with the people who were applauding (Berlusconi), shaking his hand," La Russa said.

The attack occurred at a difficult political time for Berlusconi, who has been plagued by scandals.



This video image made available by RAI TG3 shows Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi sitting in his vehicle after an attacker hurled a statuette striking the leader in the face at the end of a rally in Milan, Italy on Sunday Dec. 13, 2009.

Associated Press

On Dec. 5, tens of thousands of Italians fed up with the premier marched peacefully through Rome to demand his resignation.

The demonstrators expressed dismay over what they see as the businessman's conflict of interests, citing repeated government-backed laws they contend were tailored to help shield Berlusconi from prosecution in cases involving his media, real estate and sports empire. Berlusconi claims the laws benefit all citizens.

Other critics cite Berlusconi's sex scandals. Berlusconi's wife is divorcing him after complaining about his infatuation with young women. □

As southern Italian businessman has told investigators he procured some 30 attractive young women for parties and dinners at the premier's Rome residence and Sardinian villa. Among the guests was a high-end prostitute who claimed she slept with Berlusconi. The premier has denied ever paying for sex.

Berlusconi has steadfastly denied any wrongdoing and blames his judicial woes on prosecutors he claims sympathize with the opposition left. Several of the cases either ended in acquittal or were dropped when limitation statutes expired. Others are pending. □

N. Korean weapons seizure could affect nuke talks



Thai police officers and soldiers remove boxes of war weaponry from a suspect foreign-registered cargo plane onto trucks at Don Muang airport Saturday, Dec. 12, 2009 in Bangkok, Thailand. Five foreigners were detained and their foreign-registered aircraft impounded after it landed in the Thai capital Saturday with tons of war weaponry on board that originated in North Korea, Thai media quoted officials as saying.

Associated Press

APICHART WEERAWONG
Associated Press Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — The seizure in Thailand of some 35 tons of war weaponry from North Korea and the arrest of five foreigners charged with illegal possession of arms may prove a blow to efforts by the United States to negotiate a halt to Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions, observers said.

Thai authorities, reportedly acting on a tip from their

American counterparts, impounded an Ilyushin 76 transport plane, carrying explosives, rocket-propelled grenades and components for surface-to-air missiles, during a refueling stop at Bangkok's Don Muang airport Saturday. Four men from Kazakhstan and one from Belarus were detained.

Thai authorities took the action because of a United Nations resolution banning

the transport of certain weapons from or to North Korea, Thailand's Foreign Ministry said.

The latest sanctions were imposed in June after the reclusive communist regime conducted a nuclear test and test-fired missiles. The sanctions were aimed at derailing North Korea's nuclear weapons program, but also banned the North's sale of any conventional arms.

The seizure came just days after President Barack Obama's special envoy made a rare three-day trip to North Korea on a mission to persuade Pyongyang to rejoin six-nation nuclear disarmament talks. Envoy Stephen Bosworth said the two sides had reached common understandings on the need to restart the talks.

"There is a possibility that the incident could have a negative effect on moves to get the North to rejoin the six-party talks and a U.S.-North Korea dialogue mood," Yang Moon-jin, a professor at Seoul's University of North Korean Studies, said Sunday.

The chartered cargo plane originated in North Korea's capital, Pyongyang, and requested to land at Don Muang airport to refuel, Thai Air Force spokesman Capt. Montol Suchookorn said.

There were differing local media reports about the

plane's destination, with some saying it was headed to Sri Lanka and others saying Pakistan. "I cannot disclose the destination of their plane because this involves national security. The government will provide more details on this," Supisarn said.

North Korea has been widely accused of violating United Nations sanctions by selling weapons to nations in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Thailand made the seizure because of the U.N. sanctions, Thai Foreign Ministry spokesman Thani Thongphakdi said.

"Once further details have been finalized, and all the proper checks have been made we will report all details to the United Nations sanctions committee," he said.

The five detained men denied the arms possession charges and were refused bail, Police Col. Supisarn Pakdinarunart said. They were to appear in court Monday.

Local press reports said Thai authorities were tipped off by their American counterparts about the cargo aboard

the aircraft. U.S. Embassy spokesman Michael Turner said the embassy would not comment on the incident.

Deputy Prime Minister Suthep Thaugsuban said it would take several days to obtain details on the incident, which would be reported to

the United Nations, Belarus and Kazakhstan.

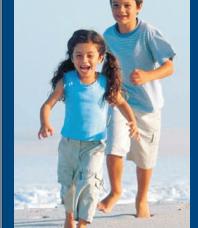
"People should not be alarmed because the government will ensure that the investigation will be carried out transparently. The government will be able to explain the situation to foreign countries," Suthep said.

Thai authorities said the weapons were moved by trucks amid high security

Saturday night from the airport to a military base in the nearby province of Nakhon Sawan.

Baek Seung-joo of the state-run Korea Institute for Defense Analyses said the seizure demonstrated a U.S. intention to continue to enforce sanctions on the North while also engaging in dialogue. Arms sales are a key source of hard currency for the impoverished North. Baek said the North is believed to have earned hundreds of millions of dollars every year by selling missiles, missile parts and other weapons to countries like Iran, Syria and Myanmar.

In August, the United Arab Emirates seized a Bahamas-flagged cargo ship bound for Iran with a cache of banned rocket-propelled grenades and other arms from North Korea, the first seizure since sanctions against North Korea were ramped up. □



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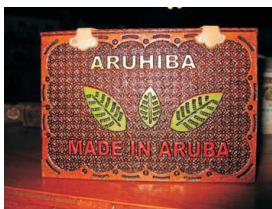
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Chile: Billionaire beat leftists, now faces runoff

MICHAEL WARREN

Associated Press Writer

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP)

— Right-wing billionaire Sebastian Pinera beat three leftists in Sunday's presidential election but failed to obtain a majority, setting up a runoff against a veteran of the coalition that has ruled Chile for two decades of democracy. With 60 percent of the vote counted, the Harvard-educated Pinera had 44 percent to 30 percent for the ruling center-left coalition's candidate, former President Eduardo Frei. Breakaway Socialist Rep. Marco Enríquez-Ominami had 19 percent, and communist Jorge Arrate had 6 percent, according to nationwide results. The trend was expected to roughly hold through Sunday's vote count, putting Pinera and Frei in a Jan. 17 runoff election where the

key question will be whether leftists can unify to fend off the most moderate candidate Chile's right has ever had.

A runoff win by Pinera, 60, would install a right-wing government in Chile for the first time since Gen. Augusto Pinochet's 1973-1990 dictatorship. But in a region now dominated by leftists, Pinera can't find the votes without persuading leftists to take a chance on him.

"We have to understand that this win doesn't belong to us," Pinera said in his victory speech to party members. "It belongs to all Chileans, to the humble people, to the poor and the middle class, the people who most need change from their government."

Frei appealed for leftists to come together, saying that he would take on his rivals' ideas as if they were his own, that

women and young people would have a prominent place in his government, and that he would make a priority of electoral reforms that end the big parties' domination of the political process. "The people have told us that there are things they don't like, that things must change, and I share this mission," said Frei, 67. Still, stability and experience are selling points for Frei, who governed from 1994 to 2000.

"We don't want leaps into the unknown, nor do we want to return to the past. We want a government that worries about the people," he said after voting. "We don't believe that the power of the market and money should have priority over a society."

But many voters are fed up with having the same government throughout 19 years of democracy following



Sebastian Pinera, presidential candidate of Chile's opposition coalition, left, waves to supporters accompanied by his wife Cecilia Morel after the country's general elections in Santiago, Sunday, Dec. 13, 2009. Pinera, a right-wing billionaire, beat three leftists in Sunday's presidential election but failed to obtain a majority, setting up a runoff against Eduardo Frei of the country's ruling coalition.

Associated Press

Pinochet. Promising change, Pinera and Enríquez-Ominami challenged the ruling coalition like never before.

Outgoing President Michelle Bachelet has 78 percent approval ratings and Chile seems on track to become a first-world nation.

Chile's economy, negligible

inflation and stable democracy are the envy of Latin America. Booming copper revenues and prudent fiscal policies have helped the government reduce poverty from 45 percent in 1990 to 13 percent today, raising per capita annual income to \$14,000 in the nation of 17 million. □



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Disney's "Princess" charms weekend moviegoers



Co-stars (L-R) Jennifer Lewis, Keith David, Anika Noni Rose, Bruno Campos, Terrence Howard, and Jim Cummings arrive for the premiere of "The Princess and the Frog" at Walt Disney Studios in Burbank, California in this November 15, 2009 file photo.

REUTERS/Jason Redmond

By Deena Beasley

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) – Disney's animated "The Princess and the Frog" hopped

over feel-good football film "The Blind Side," to take the top spot in North American box office sales in its first

weekend in wide release. The family-friendly Disney movie drew \$25 million in ticket sales. It tells the tale of

a woman turned into a frog after a kiss and marks a return for the studio to hand-drawn animation.

"It's one of those classic Disney fairy tales and people just fell in love with it," said Chuck Viane head of domestic distribution at Walt Disney Co's Buena Vista unit.

The second place football film had a take of \$15.5 million.

The No. 3 movie was Clint Eastwood's Nelson Mandela drama "Invictus," which brought in \$9.1 million.

"This film has Oscar potential written all over it and should maintain solid grosses week after week," Paul Dergarabedian, head of Hollywood.com's box office tracking division, said in a statement.

Viane also said he believes "The Princess and the Frog" will deliver "a very strong multiple of the opening weekend."

"Disney's A Christmas Carol" slipped to the No. 5 spot on

the box office chart from No. 4 the previous week with a take of \$6.9 million. It has so far taken in \$124.5 million.

Vampire romance "The Twilight Saga: New Moon" dropped two slots to No. 4 with \$8 million in ticket sales for a cumulative total of \$267.4 million.

Another potential Oscar contender is Paramount's "The Lovely Bones," directed by Peter Jackson and based on the best-selling novel. It was released in three theaters and saw per theater sales of \$38,667. Paramount Pictures is a unit of Viacom.

"Brothers," a drama about soldiers returning home from war, took sixth place with \$5 million. Both "Invictus" and "The Blind Side" were released by Time Warner Inc studio Warner Bros.

"New Moon" was distributed by independent Summit Entertainment and "Brothers" was released by Lionsgate Entertainment. □

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Traders will dissect Fed's language this week

By IEVA M. AUGSTUMS,
AP Business Writer

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Investors expect the Federal Reserve to keep a key interest rate at a historic low level. Why? Because Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke said so.

"The market has listened to him and really believes what Bernanke has said," said Daniel Penrod, senior industry analyst at the California Credit Union League.

Last week, Bernanke said that he anticipates modest economic growth next year. That should push down unemployment, "but at a pace slower than we would like," he said.

The message for investors: No rate hikes for now.

That's enough assurance for investors to hold on to for the moment, but everyone knows that the record-low interest rates that are helping to boost stock and bond returns are going to have to go away at some point as the economy recovers. The only question is when.

A number of investors see a rate hike coming within the next year as the Fed takes a pre-emptive strike to keep inflation at bay.

That would help shore up the value of the dollar, but it could also trip up a huge rally that has launched stocks sharply higher over the past nine months.

One of the biggest factors behind the stock surge has been the sinking value of the dollar, which has been brought along with the near-

zero interest rates in the U.S. Investors love low interest rates because it makes money easy to borrow for both market players and businesses.

Meanwhile a weaker dollar is a boon to big U.S. exporters by making their goods cheaper to overseas buyers. At the same time, the profits those companies earn overseas are worth more when they bring them home if the U.S. dollar is weak.

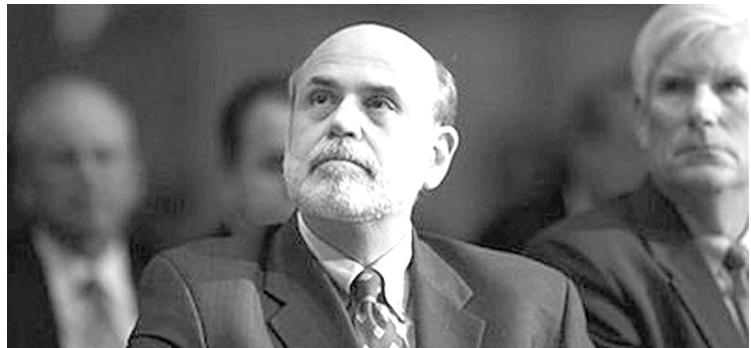
For the next clues about what the Fed might do with interest rates, investors will pore over every word the Fed says in its statement assessing economic conditions next week. The statement will accompany its decision on interest rates following a two-day policy meeting on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Jack Ablin, chief investment officer at Harris Private Bank

in Chicago, says market participants will parse the comments closely for any nuances or changes in hopes of fine-tuning their outlook on when the inevitable interest rate rise might come.

If the Fed does make significant changes to the language — something it hasn't done in months — that could lead to another rocky day on the markets, Ablin says. That happened most recently on Dec. 4, when the government reported the fewest number of monthly job cuts since the recession began two years ago.

The news was a clear, strong signal of recovery for the economy, and got many people worrying about interest rates. Ablin said investors had to "rethink where the Fed stands" after seeing the November employment report. □



FILE - In this Dec. 7, 2009 file photo, Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke is introduced before speaking during a discussion hosted by The Economic Club of Washington, in Washington. The Fed's interest rate announcement is expected at 2:15 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 16.

(AP Photo/Haraz N. Ghanbari, File)

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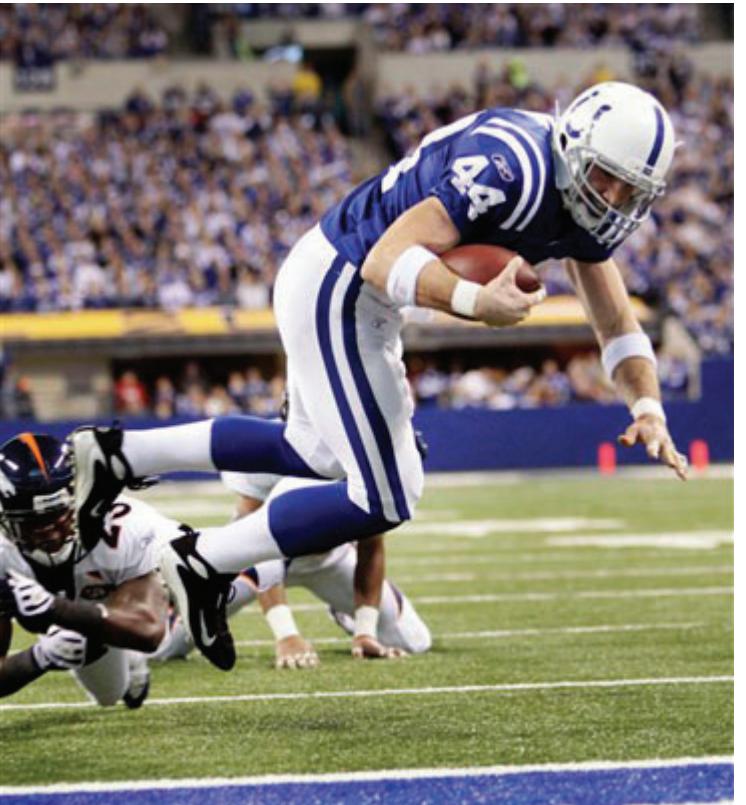
Colts beats Broncos 28-16

The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Peyton Manning threw three TD passes in the first 23 minutes, then was picked off three times, but the Colts earned their 22nd consecutive regular-season win with a 28-16 victory over the Denver Broncos on Sunday.

The Colts' defense held off the Broncos as Indy broke the Patriots' record victory streak set last year. Indianapolis is one of seven NFL teams to go 13-0, including this year's New Orleans Saints.

While the Colts (13-0) won their 114th game of the decade, breaking a tie with the 1990s San Francisco 49ers, and took a franchise record 13th consecutive home game,



Denver receiver Brandon Marshall broke the league's single-game record with 21 receptions.

Marshall tied the mark on a 5-yard TD catch with 9:44 left in the game to make it 21-16 and broke the record on the Broncos' final play.

Saints 26, Falcons 23

ATLANTA (AP) — Drew Brees was 31 for 40 and threw for 296 yards and three touchdowns, Jonathan Vilma came up with two huge defensive plays, and New Orleans remained perfect with another tight win.

Garrett Hartley won it on a 38-yard field goal with a 4:42 remaining after Atlanta rallied from 14 points down.

Continued on Page 14



Cleveland Cavaliers Mo Williams, center, is fouled as he cuts between Oklahoma City Thunder forward Jeff Green, left, and forward Nick Collison, right, in the second quarter of an NBA basketball in Oklahoma City, Sunday, Dec. 13, 2009.

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — LeBron James scored a season-high 44 points and Mo Williams hit a backbreaking halfcourt shot in the fourth quarter to help the Cleveland Cavaliers close out a 102-89 win against the Oklahoma City Thunder on Sunday. Williams tracked down the ball after Thabo Sefolosha had tipped it into

the backcourt, then turned and fired a 48-footer with coach Mike Brown yelling to him as the shot clock ran down. The shot earned him a look of disbelief and a congratulatory hand slap from James, and it gave Cleveland its largest lead to that point at 94-87.

Williams finished with 22 points,



Shani Davis, of the United States, celebrates his world record time in the men's 1500-meter at an awards ceremony at the World Cup speedskating competition at the Utah Olympic Oval, Friday Dec. 11, 2009, in Kearns, Utah. Davis finished with the time of 1:41.04.

Associated Press

Davis, Nesbitt complete middle distance sweeps

Read Page 15

NBA Roundup

Williams' halfcourt shot closes out Cavaliers' win

half of them coming in the fourth quarter.

Kevin Durant led Oklahoma City with 29 points and Jeff Green scored a season-high 26. Russell Westbrook added 10 points.

Grizzlies 118, Heat 90

At Miami, Rudy Gay scored a career-high 41 points and Marc Gasol made all seven of his shots on the way to a 16-point, 15-rebound effort as Memphis enjoyed a rare road win.

Gay made 15 of 28 shots, topping his previous career best by five points, and became just the fourth player since January 2007 to score at least 40 against Miami in a regular-season game. Jamal Crawford (40) did so on Dec. 1, 2008, while LeBron James (42) and Ben Gordon (43) each accomplished the feat last March.

Memphis also got 16 points from O.J. Mayo and 13 from Zach Randolph.

Dwyane Wade scored 25 points for Miami.

Hawks 130, Nets 107

At Atlanta, Maurice Evans scored 22 points, and Joe Johnson added 21 points and 10 assists to help Atlanta win its fourth straight.

Devin Harris, who started despite a sprained left pinky finger, scored 23 points for the Nets, who allowed a season high in points in their third consecutive loss — dropping the NBA's worst record to 2-22.

Raptors 101, Rockets 88

At Toronto, Chris Bosh led Toronto with 27 points, Hedo Turkoglu had a season-high 23, and Jarrett Jack added 17 points, eight rebounds and eight assists as Toronto downed Houston.

Carl Landry scored 25 points for Houston, and Luis Scola had 21 points and 15 rebounds. □

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Ingram delivers Crimson Tide its first Heisman

By RALPH D. RUSSO

AP College Football Writer

NEW YORK – Mark Ingram dabbed his eyes, took a deep breath and tried to steady himself. All set, he accepted the Heisman that completes Alabama's trophy case.

The tough-running tailback turned tearful after winning the Heisman Trophy on Saturday night in the closest vote in the award's 75-year history. Next, he'll try to lead the most storied program in the South to a national championship. Ingram finished 28 points ahead of Stanford running back Toby Gerhart.

The sturdy, 212-pound Ingram took a moment to get composed before starting his speech. Dressed in a dark suit with blue pinstripes, his voice wavered throughout.

"I'm a little overwhelmed right now," he said. "I'm just so excited to bring Alabama their first Heisman winner."

Ingram received 227 first-place votes and 1,304 points. Gerhart got 222 first-place votes and 1,276 points, while Texas quarterback Colt McCoy, last season's runner-up, received 203 and 1,145.

Ingram said later he was feeling relaxed — right up until the winner was announced.

"When he started reading that letter, my heart started beating and I could feel it beating real fast," he said. "When he called my name I was excited, then I saw my mom crying and it kind of made me break down, too."

His father, a former Super Bowl star, was a few miles away. Incarcerated on bank fraud and money-laundering charges, he watched his son's big win on a prison television. Nebraska defensive tackle

Ndamukong Suh was fourth and Florida quarterback Tim Tebow, who won the Heisman two years ago, was fifth.

The previous closest vote in Heisman history came in 1985, when Auburn's Bo Jackson beat Iowa quarterback Chuck Long by 45 points.

Ingram won four of the six regions. Gerhart took the far west and Suh won the southwest.

"I appreciate the way he plays," said Gerhart, who ran for 1,736 yards and scored 26 touchdowns. "The passion for the game. I'm a physical guy, he's a physical guy. I feel we're similar in a lot of ways. I'm proud of him and honored to be included with him."

Ingram has been the backbone of Alabama's offense, rushing for a school-record 1,542 yards, gaining 6.2 yards per carry and scoring 18 touchdowns.

And in his final chance to make a case for the Heisman, facing Florida's then-top-ranked defense, Ingram ran for 113 yards and scored three touchdowns to punctuate his season. The win sent the top-ranked Crimson Tide to the BCS national title game against McCoy and No. 2 Texas on Jan. 7 at the Rose Bowl. "This is a great, special moment for me but at the same time you've got to move forward," Ingram said. "We still have a national championship game to play in." Ingram hugged family members and Alabama coach Nick Saban after winning, and went to the podium. As he searched for the proper words, several former Heisman winners standing behind him offered encouragement, saying "take your time" and "it's all right."

Ingram thanked everyone he could think of, including teammates, coaches, trainers, support staff, an intern and his school teachers.

Ingram is the third consecutive sophomore to win the Heisman since Tebow became the first in 2007 and he will be the sixth winner in the last seven years to go on to play in the BCS national championship game. □

Alabama running back Mark Ingram poses for a photo during a press conference after winning the Heisman Trophy award on Saturday, Dec. 12, 2009, in New York.

Associated Press



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**NFL ROUNDUP****Continued from Page 12**

The offensive-minded Saints (13-0) then turned to defense to preserve another victory — Vilma came up with an interception, then doled out a big fourth-down hit on Jason Snelling to finish the Falcons' final drive.

New Orleans set a franchise record for wins in a season, clinched a first-round bye in the playoffs and moved a step closer to ensuring home-field advantage throughout the NFC playoffs.

Brees threw a pair of

New Orleans Saints linebacker Jonathan Vilma, top, is lifted in front of teammate linebacker Scott Shanle (58) after intercepting against the Atlanta Falcons during the fourth quarter of their NFL football game in Atlanta, Sunday, Dec. 13, 2009. New Orleans won 26-23.

Associated Press

touchdown passes to Reggie Bush and another to Marques Colston.

The Falcons (6-7) lost for the sixth time in eight games. Atlanta played without two of its biggest stars, quarterback Matt Ryan and running back Michael Turner, both out for the second week in a row.

Vikings 30, Bengals 10

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Adrian Peterson had 97 yards and two touchdowns, pushing Minnesota past mistake-prone Cincinnati.

Peterson added 40 yards receiving and set a single-season team record with 14 rushing touchdowns, moving Minnesota (11-2) within one more win of a second straight NFC North title.

Brett Favre completed 17 of 30 passes for 192 yards, one touchdown and an interception for the Vikings.

Cincinnati's Carson Palmer

was 15 for 25 for a season-low 94 yards and one touchdown, and Cedric Benson's 16 carries for 96 yards gave him his first 1,000-yard season but left the Bengals short of 100 for the first time in a month. The Bengals (9-4) committed 11 penalties for 85 yards, failing in their first chance to clinch the AFC North.

Migraines that bothered Minnesota wide receiver and kickoff returner Percy Harvin all week forced the rookie to miss a game for the first time.

Texans 34, Seahawks 7

HOUSTON (AP) — Matt Schaub and Andre Johnson put together their best game of the season to help Houston snap out of a slump and keep its dwindling playoff hopes alive.

Johnson had a season-high 193 yards receiving and two touchdowns to lead the Texans (6-7) over Seattle (5-8), breaking a four-game losing streak.

Schaub had 336 yards passing before halftime and finished with 365 yards and two touchdowns. His first-half yardage was the second-most in a first half this season in the NFL.

The defense did its job too, returning an interception for a touchdown and hurrying and harassing Matt Hasselbeck into a sub-par performance. The quarterback had three fumbles, was sacked three times and take down numerous other times and finished with 247 yards.

Packers 21, Bears 14

CHICAGO (AP) — Ryan Grant ran for 137 yards and two touchdowns, and Green Bay beat Chicago after letting a lead slip away.

Grant broke off a season-long 62-yard touchdown on the Packers' first play from scrimmage and scored the go-ahead TD in the fourth quarter after Nick Collins intercepted Jay Cutler.

Aaron Rodgers threw for 180 yards, Jermichael Finley caught five passes for 70, and Charles Woodson added his 44th career interception for the Packers (9-4), who have won five straight.

The Bears (5-8) lost for the seventh time in nine games.

Tied for the NFL lead entering the game, Cutler has 22 interceptions after getting picked off twice. □

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Davis, Nesbitt complete middle-distance sweeps

BETH HARRIS

AP Sports Writer

KEARNS, Utah (AP) — Shani Davis claimed his second title in three days, winning the 1,000 meters in the final long-track speedskating World Cup before the Vancouver Olympics.

The American skated the distance in 1 minute, 6.67 seconds Sunday at the Utah Olympic Oval, again beating rival Chad Hedrick, who was fifth. Davis won the 1,500 on Friday, lowering his own world record. He also owns the world mark in the 1,000, but didn't come close to breaking it on the final day of competition. Davis clinched Olympic berths in the 500, 1,000, 1,500, and 5,000. However, he is only firmly committed to his favorite events, the 1,000 and 1,500, and the team pursuit — the first time he's publicly confirmed he would participate in the event.

Davis famously chose not to participate in the team pursuit at the 2006 Turin Olympics, touching off a heated feud between him and Hedrick.

At that time, Davis said all along he didn't want to skate the pursuit, believing the first-time Olympic event would hurt his individual races. Hedrick — who entered five events — felt Davis let down his country by skipping a chance to give the Americans another speedskating medal. With Davis on the sideline, the U.S. team had to use a slower



Canada's Christine Nesbitt looks up at her time after finishing first in the women's 1000-meter event at the World Cup speedskating competition at the Utah Olympic Oval, Sunday, Dec. 13, 2009, in Kearns, Utah. Nesbitt won the event with the time of 1:13.36.

Associated Press

skater and was eliminated in the early rounds.

Hedrick owns the only U.S. berth in the 10,000, but if he decides not to compete in the grueling race, then Davis could claim the spot as the first alternate. However, Davis indicated that was unlikely. Skaters have until Dec. 24 to commit to specific events.

Skating in Sunday's final pairing, Davis used his trademark speed in the turns to clock the fastest time among 20 skaters. He was cheered on by short-track star and friend Apolo Anton Ohno, who also trains at the oval. Lee Kyou-Hyuk of South Korea, who won Saturday's 500, was second in 1:07.07. Mika Poutala of Finland took third in 1:07.24.

NHL Roundup

Niemi earns another SO, blanks Lightning 4-0



Chicago Blackhawks goalie Antti Niemi (31) stops a shot as the Tampa Bay Lightning's Ryan Malone (12) waits during the first period of an NHL hockey game Sunday, Dec. 13, 2009, in Chicago.

Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Blackhawks backup goalie Antti Niemi made 18 saves for his third shutout in seven starts this season, and Marian Hossa had a goal and an assist in Chicago's 4-0 victory over the slumping Tampa Bay

Lightning on Sunday night. Patrick Kane, Ben Eager and Jonathan Toews also scored for the Blackhawks, who have won three of four and improved to 6-1-1 against Eastern Conference teams.

Kane left the game with 6:59

left in the first period because of an upper-body injury and didn't return.

Kane landed hard after Matt Smaby tripped him along the boards and appeared to sustain a head injury either due to the impact or being hit with the puck.

Avalanche 3, Flames 2

At Denver, Darcy Tucker scored his first goal in nearly two months and Craig Anderson stopped 19 shots as Colorado beat Calgary to take over the spot in the Northwest Division.

Chris Stewart and Wojtek Wolski also scored for the Avalanche, 3-0 this season against the Flames.

Rene Bourque and Mark Giordano scored for Calgary. The Flames pulled Miikka Kiprusoff for an extra attacker with around a minute remaining, but couldn't tie it. Kiprusoff gave up three goals, the most he has allowed since surrendering six in a loss to Chicago on Nov. 19.



THANKS FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION

Woods' colleagues wait and wonder, like everyone

TIM REYNOLDS

AP Sports Writer

NAPLES, Florida (AP) — Say Tiger Woods' name around his PGA Tour colleagues, and the reactions are swift and varied.

From Mark Calcavecchia, there was disappointment. Chris DiMarco, concern. Boo Weekley, unusual silence.

And from others, when pondering the worst-case scenario — Woods never playing golf again — there is fear.

"Golf needs Tiger Woods," Brad Faxon said. "We wish them well and the best. I don't know what the best thing to do is. Nobody does. But I know him on the golf course is good for everybody."

Woods' future is uncertain, his family forever affected by the infidelity he acknowledged Friday on his Web site when announcing his "indefinite" leave from the game. With that, a long shadow of doubt has been cast over golf, which has seen a financial boon since Woods stormed onto the scene and now can only wait and wonder what'll happen with the world's No. 1 player and the game's biggest draw sidelined.

Will he come back?

When? Where? At what level?

There's far more questions than answers.

"The tour has got to be worried, because what's the definition of indefinite?" asked Greg Norman, the former world No. 1 and tournament host of the Shark Shootout this weekend. "Indefinite meaning, OK, it might be a year because a lot of issues have got to be resolved? That's the word you've kind of got to drill in on."

There was at least one definite move Sunday: Global consulting firm Accenture Ltd. became the first major sponsor to drop Woods. The firm said



In this Feb. 21, 2009, file photo, Tiger Woods follows through during the second round of the Accenture Match Play Golf Championship tournament at The Gallery Golf Club at Dove Mountain, in Marana, Ariz. Global consulting firm Accenture Ltd. has ended its relationship with Tiger Woods, marking the first major sponsor to cut ties altogether with the golfer since his alleged infidelities surfaced.

Associated Press

in a statement that Woods is "no longer the right representative" after the "circumstances of the last two weeks." The move ends a six-year relationship during which Accenture credited its "Go on, be a Tiger" campaign with boosting its image significantly.

In Dubai, a tournament official said Sunday that Woods has not yet canceled plans to play in the Desert Classic there in early February, and were willing to wait as long as possible for a decision.

When Woods was sidelined for eight months after his stirring win at the 2008 U.S. Open, television ratings were cut in half. Attendance is much higher when he is in a field, and even in a recession, it's surely easier to sell sponsors on the merits of spending dollars to back an event that features Woods than not.

There's real concern among tour players for Woods and his wife, Elin, and their two children.

There's some serious worry about the potential long-term effects for the tour as well. "I don't think it's going

to help anything, that's for sure," Nick Price said.

"Especially in a recession like we're in now. It's hard enough to find sponsors out there and now to try to sell things without Tiger in the field for however long it is, it's going to be a challenge. I hope he comes back. I hope he comes back a changed man."

So do fans.

Take Dodie Mills, a 61-year-old pediatric nurse from Port Charlotte, Florida. She was at the Shootout to see Kenny Perry, among others, but says her real lure to watching and playing golf has been Woods.

Him, she wants to forgive. The women whom Woods has reportedly been linked to, Mills has much harsher words for them.

"I think all the fame, all the money he has, all the women took advantage of it," Mills said. "He and his wife love each other. I know they do, and Tiger will do what's right. ... I can understand how a man in that position can be very easily swayed by women. I was 23 once. He's in his prime. All these women wanted a piece of

him."

Mills was hardly alone in that assessment.

Noted sports attorney David Cornwell also pointed out that the women — more than 10 by some counts — who have been romantically linked to Woods in the last two weeks should bear as much of the blame as the golfer himself.

"They're looking to get paid after sex," Cornwell said in a telephone interview. "They are in a different way, outside of Tiger's very significant family responsibilities, engaging in something that's very ugly and it needs to be pointed out. Their 15 minutes are soon to be up. But the destruction that they've created with this kind of salacious detail may never be repaired."

Golf will quite likely need repair as well.

The game may not have ever seen something quite like this before, but glorious eras have certainly come and gone. Great players retire, sponsorships come and go, and golf has long survived. Faxon is confident it'll survive this Woods saga, no matter the final outcome.

"I think the statement that he made was a great statement, but like everything else, there's still a lot of unknowns out there," Faxon said. "What does indefinite mean? I don't even know if he knows what that means. I just hope they do well. The forgotten thing is Elin and two kids and what they're going through."

Not by other tour players. "I ain't got no comment on that Tiger," the normally loquacious Weekley said.

"I feel for Elin. I really do. I feel bad," DiMarco said. "Any woman that goes through that, I feel bad for. They're doing it privately and you have to respect that and let them do what they like to do and hopefully come back bigger and stronger and a better person."

Graeme McDowell is a rare footnote these days in the Woods saga. He's actually benefited from it, in a way. He took Woods' spot in the 18-player Chevron World Challenge last week, finished second in the tournament that benefits Woods' foundation and essentially sealed a trip to the Masters by jumping to No. 38 in the world rankings.

And he said he's as eager to have Woods back as anyone.

"We're under no illusions. We're much more prosperous golfers for having Tiger Woods playing in our era," McDowell said. "There's plenty of global superstars on the way up to replace him. But they're not just quite ready to replace him yet. We need him to hang out for another four or five years."

Until then, they wait. Like everyone else.

"I think he's on the right track," said Calcavecchia, both a fan and friend of Woods. "I think enough's enough after the last couple weeks. Let him be and let him work on what he needs to work on." □

On Top Of The News

Email: news@arubatoday.com

Monday, December 14, 2009



When the Blue birds come back to Aruba

By: Roland W. Peterson

Like the great swan in the lake
The mighty Blue bird glides majestically high above the clouds

Little Arthur clutches the metal fence with his little fingers as he peers into the yonder sunset Not a word is spoken

Then there is a shout of joy
"There, there" as he points to the setting sun
The Blue bird is making its approach

There is excitement at the fence
Big and powerful The mighty Blue bird touches down like a little bird In all its splendor it grazes the runway

Little Arthur lets go of the fence With his aching fingers he claps in his hands

Jumping with joy he screams
"The Blue bird, the Blue bird its back again

Gilbert Berlinski passed away



ORANJESTAD - In his lifetime he was a dedicated husband, father and friend and an active member of the Jewish community of Aruba. Gilbert was born on the island on August 30th, 1951. He attended Colegio Arubano and upon graduation went to Rochester Institute of Technology where he earned a bachelor's

degree.

Together with his wife Sharon he raised a beautiful family, and was very proud of their children Darin, Nathan, Gabrielle and Ezekiel, who were raised on the island and educated abroad. Darin, the oldest is in business on Aruba, Nathan is at Washington University in St Louis doing his MBA in business. He has a bachelor's degree from Florida International University, FIU. Gabrielle also has a bachelor's degree from FIU and is currently attending medical school at Nova Southeastern University in South Florida. Ezekiel just completed his bachelor's degree in business, at the University of Florida in Gainesville.

Gilbert was a fighter. He had his first liver transplant in February of 2000. Ten months later he had to have another transplant due to organ rejection. He almost died, but was not ready to go and recovered brilliantly. Over the years that followed he had his annual checks ups that required short periods of hospitalization, but he always fought back and rebounded. Unfortunately recently the battle became unbearable. After almost two months of valiant struggle he took his last breath Saturday, at about 1p.m. at Jackson Memorial in Miami, Florida.

He is survived by his kids and his wife Sharon, and by his siblings Dr. Leonard S., Beau, Milton, Michael and Debbie. Funeral arrangements are being made, for the funeral to take place in Aruba. The family is making preparations to return his body to the home that he loved. In the end, he was peaceful and smiled, said his son Nathan.

His family and his community will miss him dearly. □

Tsunami live on stage on December 23rd

Christmas at Café the Plaza announced

ORANJESTAD - Everyone comes together for Christmas celebrations in Aruba and one of the best holiday celebrations will be held at Café the Plaza on December 23rd starting at 9 pm. One of Aruba's most popular bands "Tsunami" will be playing live on stage for everyone to enjoy. Balashi Beer will co-sponsor the event by offering Balashi for only 5 florins. The popular restaurant Café the Plaza in the Renaissance Marketplace recently announced its new, more convenient opening hours. Breakfast is delicious and plentiful, starting at 8 am and the fun continues until the bar closes down at 1 am. The kitchen is open from 8 am till midnight, giving everyone ample opportunity to enjoy the great cuisine of Café the Plaza.



The chefs of the Café the Plaza offer you a delicious meal, that you can enjoy within the wonderful ambiance of the café the Plaza. Every day café the Plaza will offer you three lunch and three dinner specials.

Café the Plaza is located in the city center of Oranjestad. Café the Plaza is not only

the perfect location to enjoy a meal or to have drinks, but it is also the perfect place to

relax and read the newspaper or to have a swinging night out at the weekend. □

At Tierra del Sol

Rotary International Golf Tournament Raises Funds for Charity

WEST PUNT -- The President of the Rotary International Club Diego Frankel announced the start of the 10th annual Rotary Golf Tournament, a sold-out event at Tierra del Sol, on Saturday.

The tournament collected funds for the local Autism

foundation, for a Teen Pregnancy project, and for the recently launched Dress a Child initiative, in conjunction with other Service Clubs, reports Ravee Boolchand, on the organizing committee.

The shotgun-start of the four-man scramble at 12:30 p.m.

heralded an excellent day of golf which culminated with an award ceremony and prizes at 6:30 p.m., accompanied by an attractive raffle over delicious barbecue dinner, prepared by Ventanas del Mar restaurant. Garage Centraal offered a Mercedes for a hole in one,

and generous other sponsors from the community donated gifts for Closest to Pin and Longest Drive.

Head Golf Pro Oliver Reed, together with Golf Pro Adam Williamson welcomed one-hundred and twenty-eight golfers, in thirty-two teams of

four to the last golf tournament of 2009. □

ALOHA BRIDGE CLUB ARUBA (ABC) (ABC) (ABC)

RESULTS THURSDAY, 10 DECEMBER 2009

A total of 11 pairs attended the morning bridge session at the Members Lounge of the Aruba Beach Club Resort. The club members were pleased to welcome back Gloria Manna, Davida and Harold Schachter and Phyllis and Murray Kessler.

The results 50% and higher are as follows:

- 1 Gloria Manna / Els Lacle 68.13 %
- 2 Stascha Hornix / Geke In 't Veld 58.75 %
- 3 Gerry Meenhorst / Nelly Aal 58.13 %
- 4 Annette Ybeles / Joke Henriquez 56.25 %

RESULTS FRIDAY, 11 DECEMBER 2009

The evening bridge session at the Frank Conway Room of the Casa del Mar Beach Resort attracted 10 pairs.

The following guest players joined: Joke and Gerrit van Dullemen, Davida and Harold Schachter, Jan van der Roest, Phyllis and Murray Kessler, Kees Vader.

The results 50% and higher are as follows:

- 1 Davida and Harold Schachter 68.75 %
- 2 Phyllis and Murray Kessler 64.58 %
- 3 Willy Flanegin / Joke Henriquez 55.21 %

Aloha Bridge Club Aruba meets twice a week: on Thursday mornings at the Members Lounge of the Aruba Beach Club, starting at 9:00 am and on Friday evenings at the Frank Conway Room of Casa del Mar starting at 7:30 pm. Signing up closes ten minutes before starting time. Fee for guest players: \$ 6.00 or Afl. 10.00 per person.

The club can also be of assistance in finding single players a bridge partner. Please call Addy Eilers : tel. 582-4953 □



**The Holiday Season
is a time for giving, and you can
help make it a very special
holiday for families and
children in need on Aruba.**

Just bring a new, unwrapped toy or books to the offices of Aruba Today & Bon Dia Aruba, located at Weststraat 22, Oranjestad, and the good elves at Caribbean Speed Printers N.V. will wrap and deliver the toys in time for the holidays.

Monetary gifts will be accepted as well, with all proceeds going towards the purchase of toys for families and children in need. Donations will be accepted until the December 15, 2009.

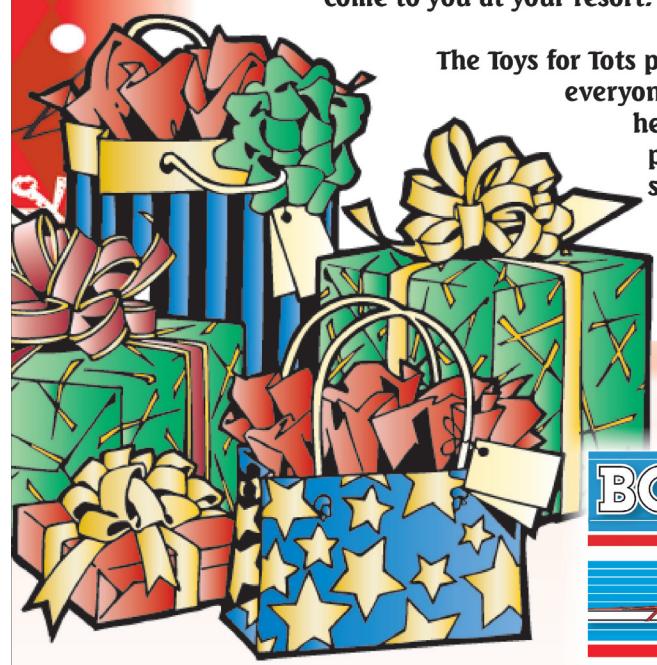
Toys for Tots will also accept donations of non-perishable food items, and the good elves at Caribbean Speed Printers N.V. will make grocery bags to be distributed to families in need, especially those affected by the recently floats.

Visiting the island and not sure how to find us to make a donation? Give us a call at 582-7800 during regular business hours and ask for the "Toys for Tots" department, and we will come to you at your resort.

The Toys for Tots program would like to thank everyone in the community of Aruba for helping to make this special project possible, including generous support from the following sponsors:

Masha Danki

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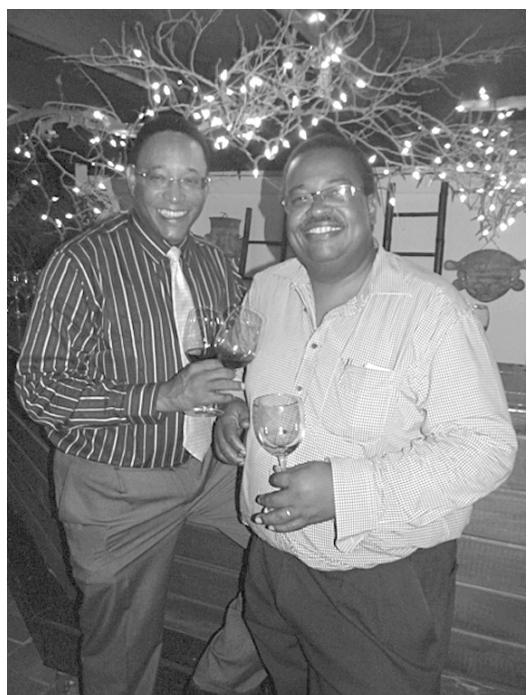
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Tickets available at Jolly Pirates Shop at MooMba Beach. Boarding at MooMba Beach- by the high rise hotels between Holiday Inn and Marriott Resorts. Offer not valid in combination with other discount offers. Valid for direct telephone reservations only - Present coupon upon boarding.

The verdict: superb!

Chris Fun presents his Solus 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon at Papiamento



NOORD - Pharmacist Chris Fun is the first Aruban to have his own private wine label. Brightly colored, with the sun and sea playing starring roles, the label on his bottles breathes the essence of this island. His wines are called Solus. Last Friday evening he presented his second Cabernet Sauvignon to friends at Papiamento Restaurant. It was an intimate affair in the spectacular garden. The lovely, creamy yet fresh 2006

Chardonnay was poured first, and then the Solus 2005 Cabernet. Before long it was time for the newly arrived 2006 Cabernet.

Full bodied, it is fruit packed, with a lingering aftertaste that makes you want to taste more. The Solus Cabernet Sauvignon 2006 has aged for 18 months in a new French oak barrel. It is a truly stunning wine.

Early in 2005, Chris came across an article about Crushpad, an innovative



facilitator for people who wish to make their own, custom-made wines. He realized that this was something he had always wanted to do and



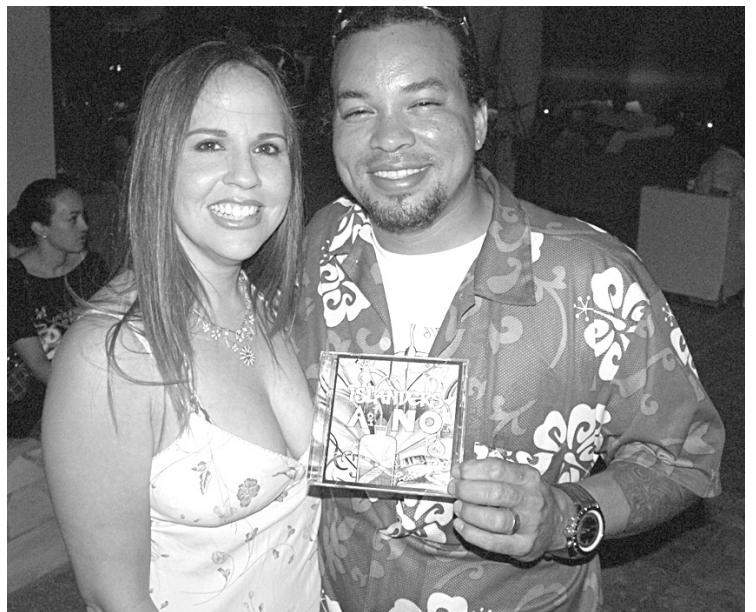
made a connection via the internet. Crushpad enables people to participate in the magic of winemaking, whether as a hobby or for marketing. For Chris the educational and scientific aspects of winemaking were intriguing, and he has jumped into the making of wines from a distance with a vengeance. Close contact with his winemaker and three barrel samples per year, shipped per FedEx, have resulted in three gorgeous wines so far.

“Making your own wine, even at a distance, gives you a magical feeling,” says Chris. “You determine which wine you wish to make, the style you are looking for, you even select the vineyard the fruit is to be sourced from and together with one of Crushpad’s professional winemakers you embark

upon the adventure.” Last Friday was magical indeed: Papiamento Restaurant’s food was fantastic, as always, the wines were superb, the company more than a bit nice.

Chris was beaming, having wine loving friends and connoisseurs come and taste his Solus. His aim is to make wines that will showcase the characteristics of the particular grape variety used. “A great wine is like an orchestra. All the various instruments come together as one and the resulting music is harmonious and very well balanced,” he said. We believe he has created an opus with his Solus 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon. Solus is available at Papiamento Restaurant, Flying Fishbone Restaurant, Screaming Eagle and Chez Matilde. □

The Islanders debut their second CD at Pure Beach



PALM BEACH – Pure Beach at Divi Aruba Phoenix Beach Resort was the perfect setting for the enchanting debut of The Islanders second CD, titled "A-
No!".

Duo Angelo & Irene, both born in Aruba and educated in the Netherlands, wrote, composed, arranged and co-produced the

compilation of original tracks. As husband and wife in real life, they share their love for each other, their interest in music and their total adoration of their baby daughter Angelina, who is the inspiration for a most charming song on the album. The tracks on the CD are all fun musical thoughts, in the unique style of The Islanders which is spontaneous and anchored in the here and now.

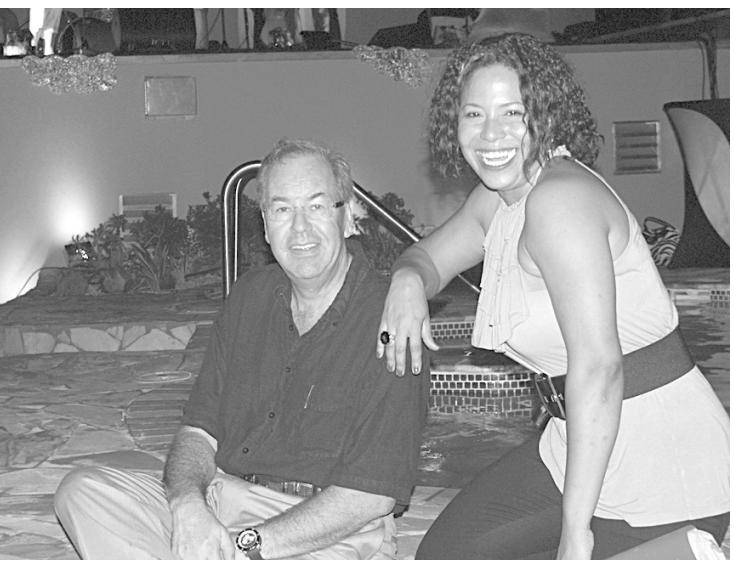
For their album's great reveal The Islanders received some help from their friends, top island musicians who showed up for the premier to help introduce the music to fans.

Hildward Croes, keys and accordion, Jair Britten, percussion, Jeremy Bonarriba, drums, Derrick Lopez, guitar and Ivan Quandus, bass, joined Angelo & Irene on a raised stage at Pure Beach and delighted a diverse audience of locals and visitors with their cute lyrics and catchy reggae-inspired tunes, with a sprinkle of electronics to hold it all together, courtesy of popular master-mixer Michael Lampe. The evening was produced by Mosaic and featured dramatically lit stage backdrops and four nymphs in the Jacuzzi below the stage, sipping champagne under the stars, dressed in skimpy bikinis, island style.

Vibration PR organized the party sponsored by Heineken Beer and Malibu Rum.

Guests enjoyed cocktails and lounged around on the comfortable slip-covered sofas wishing the evening would never end. Also on hand to congratulate The Islanders, member of Parliament Evelyn Wever Croes, who is Irene's sister, and the proud mom to one of the concert's young backup vocalists; Island Marketing & Promotion Manager The Links at Divi Aruba, Tabitha Fecunda, Managing Director Divi Resorts, Alex Nieuwmeyer – he came up with the clever musicians-on-the-raised-stage idea, and Divi Aruba Phoenix Beach Resort General Manager John Neophytou.

Pictured here Fernando Mansur of Mosaic and Maria Silva of Vibration baptize the new Islanders CD, "A No!", live on stage, just before the concert. □



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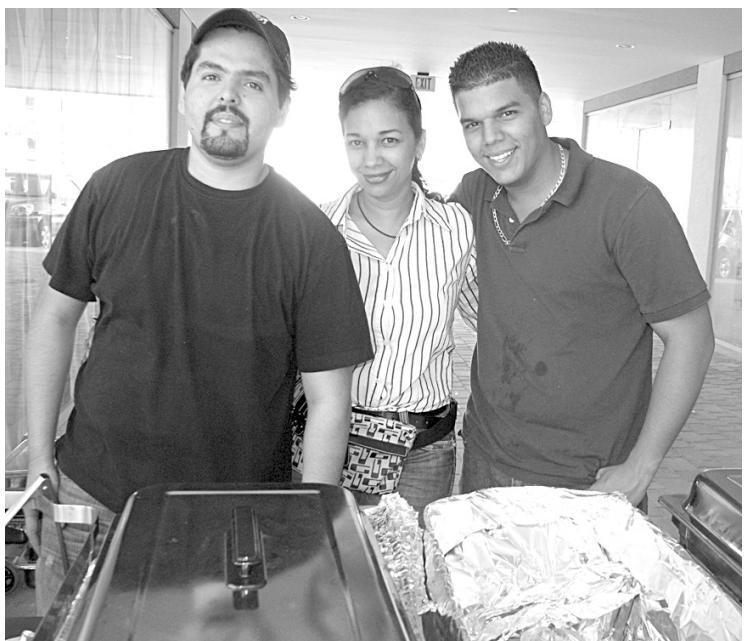
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It's the Final Countdown

Three exciting floors of retail, and entertainment are about to open *on December 18th*



Palm Beach – The Palm Beach Plaza Mall hosted a barbecue this weekend inviting all staff members hired to work in the new stores and restaurants, for a social meet and mingle affair. Pictured here the staff of Mimo's Ice Cream trying on their new aprons, and the crew of The ShoeBox, La Chinata, Bianco e Bianco and Bianco e Bianco Piu, getting to know each other as the busy bees at Shivas Gold & Gems are unpacking a mountain of boxes in preparation for the opening.

The Palm Beach Plaza Mall is proud of its mix of tenants with the following variety: Groundfloor: Mama's Mexico, Bianco e Bianco, Bianco e Bianco Piu, Shivas Gold & Gems, Underground, Flow, Muaa, Barrel Bay, Skechers, Birkenstock / Vanillia, Post Aruba NV, Sunspecs Sunglass Boutique, Totto, Monarch Jewels, Havana Cigar & Spirit Bar, Coffee Village Aruba, Nautica, Bisou Bisou Pink, San Marina, The ShoeBox, La Chinata, Benetton, Giordano, Penha, Tio Pepe, Mimo's Ice Cream, Aruba Aloe & Tango Tours.

Second Floor: Kaffas, Hoshi Sushi, Basinger, Technoland, Art Fusion, Pixies, Aruba Mega Plex, Candyland, Panache, Green Door Spa & Beauty Salon, Kokomos & Casa Tua Mediterranean.



Third Floor: Fun City, Chicken, Aladdin Shoarma
Churromania, Beef'es Express, American Burger,
Argentinean Grill, Chubby Mundo Gelato & Palm Beach
Panda, Scieu Scieu, Bon Dream Bowl. □



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MUST PLAY TWO (2) HOURS

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Wednesday \$10 Buy-in \$1,500 Guaranteed
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At Hard Rock Cafe Aruba

Marisela debuts her official single & video clip



PALM BEACH – Marisela one of the island's best loved rock divas is conducting a free concert at Hard Rock Café, Palm Beach Centre on

December 16th, starring her band Aquarius. Marisela has been playing on the island for the past seven years, and while performing at popular



bars and cafes, she has also been writing some original material, now compiled into a brand new album.

"She Confidential" will debut at the Hard Rock café with a full band.

Marisela will be backed up by some local and international musical surprises, as her single and her video clip are released.

"We have been working around the clock to make it a very unique and special night," says band member Mario, "it will be one set of all her own original songs, and we will be for the first time backed by a full live band consisting of 7 musicians. The evening's gig will also be recorded for a live CD to be released in 2010, accompanied by a DVD." The concert will stream live on Magic 96.5FM, and as part of the festivities Marisela will be raffling off one of her own



signed guitars.

All fans and followers are invited for an unforgettable evening. South Beach Lounge at the South Beach Centre will be hosting the after-party with DJ ChronicBox.

Another single, It's My Life,

will be launched by Marisela during the first quarter of 2010. Don't miss a great musical performance. Marisela is seen here with press members at her press conference and with HRC Manager Gino Schwengle. □

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AT RENAISSANCE - ORANJESTAD

R	THE BLIND SIDE	5:45	8:30	NEW
	daily: matinee: 12:00	2:45	late show: 11:30	
G	THE PRINCESS AND THE FROG	4:45		
	daily: matinee: 12:15	2:30	late show:	
R	PRECIOUS	7:00	9:30	
	daily: matinee:		late show: 12:00	
R	NINJA ASSASSIN	4:00	6:30	8:45
	daily: matinee: 1:30		late show: 11:00	
PG	OLD DOGS	6:15	8:15	10:15
	daily: matinee: 12:15	2:15	late show: 12:15	
PG-13	2012	4:15	7:45	
	daily: matinee: 12:45		late show: 11:15	
PG-13	THE TWILIGHT SAGA: NEW MOON	6:00	9:00	
	daily: matinee: 12:15	3:00	late show: 11:45	

AT PASEO HERENCIA

R	KOMT EEN VROUW BIJ DE DOKTER	7:00	9:30	NEW
	daily: matinee:		late show: 12:00	
PG	ARMORED	5:30	7:45	9:45
	daily: matinee: 1:00	3:15	late show: 12:00	
PG-13	THE TWILIGHT SAGA: NEW MOON	5:45	8:45	
	daily: matinee: 12:00	3:00	late show: 11:45	
G	THE PRINCESS AND THE FROG	4:45		
	daily: matinee: 12:15	2:30	late show:	
PG-13	2012	4:30	8:00	
	daily: matinee: 1:00		late show: 11:30	
PG-13	A CHRISTMAS CAROL 3D	4:45		
	daily: matinee: 12:15	2:30	late show:	3D
PG-13	EVERYBODY'S FINE	4:30	6:45	9:00
	daily: matinee: 12:00	2:15	late show: 11:15	
R	PARANORMAL ACTIVITY	7:00	9:30	
	daily: matinee:		late show: 11:45	

Matinee: sat & sun | Late show: fri & sat



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PALM BEACH – The health and calorie conscious among us need fear steakhouses no more. Whether it's a low-carb, low-fat, or even vegetarian diet you follow, Texas de Brazil Churrascaria fits into just about every dieter's menu plan.

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The Brazilian-style steakhouse also offers up a garden full of healthy eats on a lavish 40-item seasonal salad bar, giving dieters plenty to choose from to accompany the

slow-roasted meats. A selection of fresh lettuces and vegetables may be standard for most salad bars, but Texas de Brazil's version goes a gourmet twist further, treating the palate to additional items like marinated portabella mushrooms, sweet roasted bell peppers, hearts of palm, sundried tomatoes, imported cheeses—including fresh buffalo mozzarella—sushi, homemade soups, and much more.

The salad bar is included in the continuous service meal with unlimited choices from the grilled meats, but for vegetarians or the non-meat eaters, a special price is offered for just the salad bar. Of course, for those looking to splurge while on vacation, Texas de Brazil will gladly serve their garlic mashed potatoes, traditional fried plantains, and their world-famous parmesan cheese bread as part of the meal.

Restaurant
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CRAZY FISH MONDAY @ BUGALOE

Fresh 18oz Snapper or Grouper for only \$ 20



PALM BEACH - Fresher than fresh, is the motto of the popular Bugaloe Beach Bar & Grill at De Palm Pier. Caught in the morning, served at night... That's the Bugaloe way!

Chef Marc Hernandez is proudly presenting his rich platter with an 18oz Red Snapper or Grouper, a choice depending on the catch of that day. "Bugaloe is known for fun and craziness, so it was just a logical step for me to go crazy with this colorful pallet

of exquisite fish, yellow rice and rich vegetables," Chef Marc says. With a smile he adds "And that just for US\$ 20!"

And right he is, as the platter has been a hit from the start. Served with a bottle of white wine this fish feast is truly a delight on your Monday night.

**Bugaloe is located at
De Palm Pier in
Palm Beach between
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MENU ITEMS

Burgers, Pizzas, Salads
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Bugaloe Beach Bar and Grill is open daily from 9am till midnight. You may go there for a casual lunch or dinner and on Mondays the special is served from 5:30pm till 10:00pm. Reservations are not needed... just follow the good music, the fun and the smiles on the beach and you will know where Bugaloe is.

SALSA WORKSHOP

Always wanted to learn how to dance Salsa? Well, you will get your chance on Wednesday evening. Reggie and Sabine from ArubaSalsa will show you the moves of Latin

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Wednesday 7-11 pm: PM Band
Friday 6-10pm: PM Band
Sunday 6-10pm: Tsunami, Marisela, Robert Jeand'or or Abstract Dawn

Dr. Vis' team enjoys holiday cheer at Aqua Grill



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Photo by Diane Keijzer

PALM BEACH – Last week, Dr. Vis, one of the island's beloved family physicians, treated her office practice staff and management to a holiday dinner together at Aqua Grill restaurant in Palm Beach.

The group enjoyed choosing from a menu of fresh fish caught from local waters, as well as other seafood delicacies, including live Maine

lobster, flown in fresh daily. Aqua Grill specializes in coordinating small and large group events, with a dedicated staff of event planning professionals to help plan all the details, with menus of seafood and non-seafood dishes that can be tailored for each event by award-winning Executive Chef Scott Scheuerman. □



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Playa Linda celebrates the holiday season on the beach



RENAISSANCE ISLAND – Year-end celebrations took a tropical turn, with the Playa Linda Beach Resort recently holding its annual holiday dinner and awards ceremony out on the beach at

the Renaissance Island. The picturesque, outdoor environment provided the perfect venue for the close-knit crew to share in a holiday meal, dance to lively rhythms provided

by DJ Oslin Boekhoudt and the More than Music band as well as to honor stand-out colleagues.

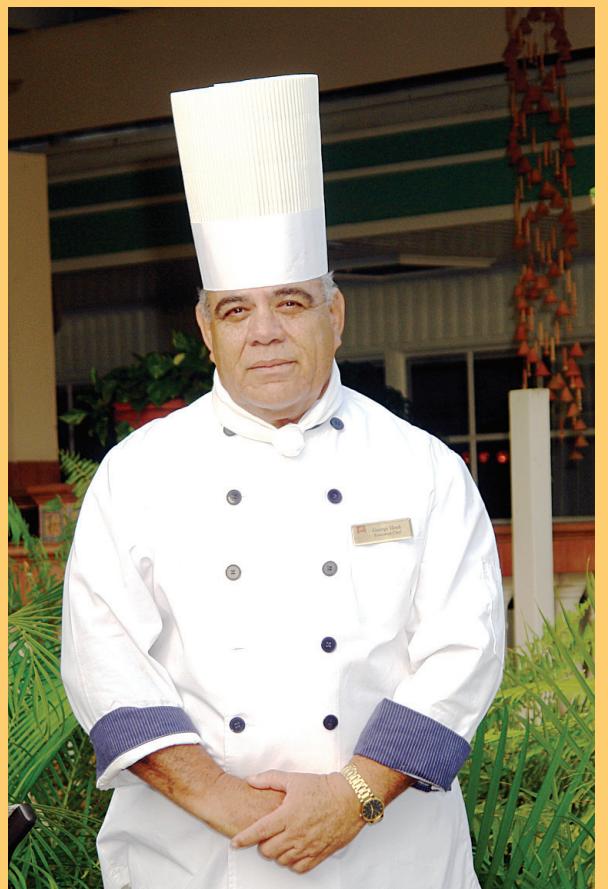
Playa Linda's "Tropical Christmas under the Stars" event was highlighted by the announcement of its Employee of the Year Luders Cadevil from the Grounds Department; Supervisor of the Year Sybil Henriquez-John from the Housekeeping Department; Rookie of the Year Jomar Abian from the Maintenance Department; and the Department of the Year Activities & Concierge Department. General Manager Jan van Nes, together with Financial Director Jan Leysner and Human Resource Manager Michelle Mendes, praised this year's winners as well as provided well-deserved recognition to the entire crew for what has been an all-together excellent

year for the popular timeshare resort. Board Member Jack Masser, who was also present, further expressed his appreciation for Playa Linda employees on behalf of the resort's members.

"Our year-end celebration was once more a success, not only for the evening itself, which was fantastic in its food, music and ambiance, but as an example of the level of excellence that Playa Linda expects from and for its employees," comments Human Resource Manager Michelle Mendes. "For our celebration, Magaly Willems did a great job in organizing the entire event, but in the end, it was the go-the-extra-mile effort of each employee and their year-round contributions on the job that provided us the basis to celebrate on a grand scale." □



The French Steakhouse delivers dining under the stars



Eagle Beach – The French Steakhouse at the Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa just added another charming dining option, a tropical outdoor courtyard, featuring delicious cuisine under the

stars.

The famed French Steakhouse prides itself on the elegant dining experience it offers patrons in the fully air-conditioned dining room. Yet recently the idea of adding a garden spot to the existing blueprint began to sprout in the creative mind of Executive Chef George Hoek, and he immediately recruited the landscapers to create the intimate, lovely setting. The French Steakhouse Ooh-La-La menu is now served indoor and alfresco, featuring creative appetizers, soups, salads, seafood dishes, poultry and the Pièce de Résistance South American & USDA Beef specialties.

Among popular appetizers the chef's Tropical Crab Cakes with pineapple & mango salsa and the Teriyaki Glazed Seared Duck Breast, served with garden greens and balsamic dressing, are real crowd pleasers.

True to the restaurant's French roots, the Onion Soup is a classic, while the Honey Glazed Salmon Salad winks at the exotic East with a sweet soy dressing. The menu features a great variety of seafood dishes from fresh fish to the totally sinful and amazingly decadent Caribbean Stuffed Shrimp with Crabmeat and Bacon, which became an instant hit. The tequila and sweet chili glaze, lends the Jumbo shrimp a pure taste of heaven!

The French Steakhouse is naturally famous for the South American Churrasco steak, a signature preparation, which now shares the stage with juicy



USDA beef specialties such as NY Sirloin and Filet Mignon.

Light-eaters will find the Jerk Chicken Skewers and the Lemon Herb Broilers very satisfying.

Open seven days a week from 5:30 p.m. - 11:00 p.m. the French Steakhouse is blessed with the nicest staff and a delightfully renovated dining room with sparkling China, crisp linen, an interesting bread basket, colossal desserts and live jazz on piano with Eddy Samson who is Aruba's best entertainer, and a walking & breathing music encyclopedia, just whistle the tune, and Eddy will produce a symphonic version of your favorite song.

Hungry patrons will appreciate the Ambassador's 5-course menu featuring the run of the menu highlights for just \$34.95 per person. www.manchebo.com/steakhouse □

Pega Pega Café & Beach Bar reinvents Beach Cuisine



Eagle Beach – Pega Pega Café & Beach Bar at the Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa is widely recognized as the home of Beach Cuisine.

Executive Chef George Hoek and his culinary team serve a Sun Splashed menu on the ocean front terrace, raising the restaurant to a must-visit, must-try status.

The contemporary menu, lists many favorite dishes from around the world, borrowing inspiration from US, Mexican, Thai, Jamaican, Cuban, Greek and Mediterranean kitchens, all served with a tropical, Caribbean flair.

From Sun-Sational Salads, to Cuban pressed jawbreakers and wraps, mid-day platters also include oversize Beef Burgers, Philly Cheese Steak Sandwiches and Hot Dogs.

The Pega Pega tropical &

frozen cocktail list, with fresh fruit or ice cream smoothies, daiquiris, coladas and

margaritas, leaves nothing out, including Yellow Birds, Sex on the Beach and Mudslides,



making a lunch-time brain-freeze, extremely easy to get!

The Pega Pega, one of Aruba's oldest beach bars is open on fabulous Eagle Beach, with

unrivaled views, caring,

gracious service, and relaxed

atmosphere, from 12 noon to

5 p.m. The bar is open from

11 a.m. to 11 p.m. □

Giorgio's Ristorante Italiano introduces Menu Turistico



Eagle Beach -- Giorgio's Ristorante Italiano located at the heart of the low-rise hotels at the Manchebo Beach Resort &

Spa, delivers authentic Mediterranean flavors, at a reasonable price.

The restaurant has just introduced Menu Turistico a three-course dinner featuring appetizers, main courses and desserts for just \$19.95, per person, plus 15% service charge.

Patrons may choose between home made soup and Caesar salad, Fettuccini Alfredo, Lasagna Casarecia, Spaghetti alla Bolognese or any favorite pizza with Tiramisu, Cheese Cake or Ice Cream for the sweet finale.

Executive Chef George Hoek is the resort's much-appreciated culinary expert. He was the recent recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award, presented by the Aruba Hotel & Tourism Association in collaboration with the Digicel Group. Chef George accepted the Shoco Award, the national award of excellence, and Aruba's top professional decoration, in the tourism industry. □

Dutch Caribbean island offers diving around the clock, and other activities for decompressing

BRIAN WITTE

Associated Press Writer

KRALENDIJK, Bonaire (AP)

— On a slow ascent to the surface of the water from 60 feet down, the divemaster spots something thrilling along the reef and extends her hand with all five fingers wiggling excitedly. It's a signal that can only mean one thing: Octopus! Scuttling around coral, the octopus quickly scrunches up into an eight-armed torpedo and squirts away. Soon, it stops to unfold itself on a sandy patch of the reef — almost as if to pose the best side of its bulbous, mushy head. Then, it camouflages into the seascape right before our eyes. It's a surprise to see how quickly the shape-shifter fades into the reef's backdrop. But surprises tend to be the norm in this unique marine park with a plentiful array of coral, fish and sea creatures. It doesn't take many dives to find validation in the words on vehicle license plates back on land, dubbing Bonaire "Diver's Paradise." With more than 350 species of fish on a reef that circles the 111-square-mile island, divers tend to focus on making the most of water visibility that can extend to about 100 feet in mostly calm waters. The predominant recreational activity here often requires the silent communication of hand signals, and it's a quiet that's also often present on land. Bonaire lacks loud discos, and there's little demand for 2 a.m. last calls. The island offers some nightlife with waterside restaurants, a small casino with \$5 minimum blackjack, and bars with acoustic guitar players. But the bright lights you'll see here at night will most likely be coming from underwater, as divers search for small nocturnal sea creatures near shore. Still, beyond diving and snorkeling, this small sleepy island 50 miles north of Venezuela has plenty of other activities to enjoy while decompressing for the next dive, or even if you don't dive at all. Bonaire, which is part of the Netherlands Antilles along with Aruba and Curacao, also offers big opportunities for sport fishing. Tuna, marlin and

tarpon are among common targets, while fresh wahoo often is advertised on boards outside of restaurants. The island also is famous for its bonefish, a favorite gamefish known for testing anglers with its fight. The island holds several fishing tournaments throughout the year. Steady winds cool down the hot and sunny afternoons and create excellent windsurfing conditions. The shape of the island is known for shifting the winds into different strengths, creating optimum conditions for both the new and experienced windsurfer. Unique kayaking trips also are an option. Several dive lodges offer courses, including a full certification course for ocean kayaking. Kayakers can take a more relaxing trip through the island's mangrove forests. The island's Lac Bay area includes four species of mangrove trees, and some guides provide time for snorkeling in the clear waters. Birdwatching is another island highlight, particularly for flamingos who breed here. While weather and migration patterns dictate their numbers, the pink stilt-legged birds can outnumber the human population of about 14,000. Lake Gotomeer in the northern part of the island is a flamingo sanctuary, and a road around one side of the lake allows a close look. But it's best to keep your distance or the birds tend to fly away. The lake is in Washington Slagbaai National Park, where parrots, parakeets also can be found. The park also showcases the tropical desert environment common to the island with tall, thin cacti and iguanas, who sometimes end up in soup back in the capital. Despite the varied recreational options, let there be no mistake: this place caters to diving in ways few places ever have. Bonaire is unique for its shore diving, because the reef begins a short distance from land, descending at about a 45-degree angle to about 130 feet. The island has more than 50 easily accessible shore diving sites, marked along roads with yellow-painted stones. Pickups can be rented to drive to sites

on your own. Divers can even find drive-through tank service for compressed air refills. Boats take divers to a small undeveloped sister island nearby called Klein Bonaire for even more dive sites. Guides can greatly enhance a dive, because they often know where small hard-to-find critters like sea horses can be spotted. They also have good eyes for interesting behavior, such as when fish swim up to the reef so that the tiny parasites they harbor can be eaten off by small shrimp at so-called "cleaning stations." You'll see something different on just about every dive. In four days of diving last summer, I often spotted colorful stoplight parrotfish, doctorfish, sergeant majors, trumpetfish, four-eye butterfly fish, squirrelfish and school masters. I also saw lettuce slugs, a scorpionfish, a small orange sea horse, a spotted burrfish, a spotted trunkfish, spotted drum and a southern stingray. Brain corals and mountainous star coral are frequently seen. Corals rise up like candelabra throughout the reef. Bushy clusters of sea plumes and large sea fans are common, as well as colorful sponges, including long purple tube sponges, luminous vase sponges and large elephant ears. Green and spotted moray eels can be seen popping out of reef recesses. Brightly colored Christmas tree worms festoon many corals. Besides the fish and coral, large creatures also can be found, including sea turtles and sting rays, including eagle rays. Many hotels along the water heavily cater to divers. Captain Don's Habitat, founded in 1976 by Don Stewart, is a diver's Xanadu, offering diving excursions 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The habitat provides just about anything a diver could need, short of gills. The resort also is known for using low-impact construction methods and a state-of-the-art wastewater treatment system. Stewart, 84, who was instrumental in encouraging the Dutch government to create a marine park around it in 1979, still lends a rabble-rousing voice to urge hotels



This photo taken July 6, 2009 shows Don Stewart, who founded the diving industry on Bonaire, taking a turn on the dance floor during a happy hour at Capt. Don's Habitat, the lodge he created to cater to divers.

(AP Photo/Brian Witte) (Brian Witte, AP / July 9, 2009)

and resorts to take greater care in wastewater treatment. He has long been outspoken about balancing tourism with care for the environment, a balance the island has worked to maintain. "I have a lot of hope that we are going to continue as we have in the past," he said in an interview. Stewart, who helped start

the diving industry on the island, still drops by for happy hour at the lodge bar to mingle with divers who have been coming for years and to dance with the ladies. "Ninety percent of those people are my family, and I love posing with the girls," he said. □

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1BR	WK 46	ROOM 544	P.O.	\$ 5.000
1BR	WK 47	ROOM 172	O.F.	\$ 9.000
2BR	WK 50	ROOM 546/548	P.O.	\$ 12.000

ARUBAN RESORT

2BR	WK 49 - 50	ROOM 1552	P.V.	\$ 7.000 PW
1BR	WK 49 - 50	ROOM 1515	P.V.	\$ 6.000 PW

MARRIOTT SURF CLUB

2BR	WK 18 - 50	GOLD	G.V.	\$ 12.000
2BR	WK 18 - 50	GOLD	O.V.	\$ 14.000
2BR	WK 18 - 50	GOLD	O.S.	\$ 18.000

MARRIOTT OCEAN CLUB

2BR		GOLD	O.V.	\$ 15.000
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COSTA LINDA BEACH RESORT

2BR	WK 50/51	ROOM 3007	P.O.	\$ 60.000
2BR	WK 50	ROOM 3005	P.O.	\$ 17.000
2BR	WK 46	ROOM 3002	P.O.	\$ 12.500
2BR	WK 47	ROOM 2009	P.O.	\$ 12.500

DIVI PHOENIX

1BR	WK 45	ROOM 307	P.O.	\$ 6.500
1BR	WK 48	ROOM 207	P.O.	\$ 6.000
1BR	WK 4	ROOM 1001	O.V.	\$ 6.000

LA CABANA BEACH & RAQUET CLUB

1BR	WK 46 & 47	ROOM 330C	P.O.	\$ 5.000 PW
STU	WK 47	ROOM 404B	P.O.	\$ 4.500
STU	WK 47	ROOM 237B	O.V.	\$ 4.000
1BR	WK 48	ROOM 112C	P.O.	\$ 5.000

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OPTIONAL ALL INCLUSIVE

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1BR SP	WK 45 & 46 OR FLOATING WK 18 & 50			\$ 30.000
2BR	WK 18-26 / 36-50	ALL INCLUSIVE		\$ 20.000
3BR	WK 18-50	O.F.		\$ 30.000 PW
STU	WK 18-50	O.V. MANDATORY	ALL INCLUSIVE	\$ 8.500

PARADISE BEACH VILLAS

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1BR	WK 50	ROOM 101	P.O.	\$ 6.000
1BR	WK 50	ROOM 306	G.V.	\$ 6.000

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Cuba y Venezuela estrechan alianza con contratos 3.000 mlns dls

LA HABANA (Reuters) - Cuba y Venezuela firmaron el sábado nuevos acuerdos de cooperación por unos 3.000 millones de dólares, reforzando los cimientos económicos de la estrecha alianza política entre los gobiernos de izquierda de ambos países. Venezuela, uno de los mayores exportadores de petróleo del mundo, es una fuente vital de energía para Cuba, a quien exporta 98.000 barriles diarios de crudo en condiciones preferenciales de financiamiento.

El presidente venezolano, Hugo Chávez, estrechó la alianza con la firma el sábado de decenas de nuevos acuerdos en áreas como informática, telecomunicaciones, minería, azúcar y agricultura.

“Esto es impresionante (...) se firmaron contratos, 264 contratos por un total de 2.951 millones de dólares”, dijo Chávez al clausurar en La Habana una reunión bilateral



El presidente de Venezuela, Hugo Chávez (izquierda), y su homólogo cubano, Raúl Castro, levantan sus brazos en La Habana, dic 12 2009. REUTERS/HO-Miraflores Palace (CUBA)

con el presidente de Cuba, Raúl Castro.

“Cubanos y venezolanos estamos frente al mismo desafío. No podemos permitir que nuestras revoluciones se detengan o se debiliten.

No, fortalecerlas y (...) estos convenios apuntan e inciden directamente en esa dirección”, añadió.

Chávez dijo que otros 21 proyectos por 210 millones de dólares serían firmados en las

próximas semanas.

Cuba y Venezuela firmaron además un memorando para crear el futuro empresas mixtas de aviación e hidrocarburos, pero los detalles no fueron divulgados.

“Año tras año crece cualitativa y cuantitativamente nuestra interacción”, dijo Raúl Castro.

“Hemos coincidido en la necesidad de que nuestro actuar conjunto se dirija a atenuar los negativos efectos derivados de la actual crisis económica global”, añadió.

Cuba, con los bolsillos vacíos por una caída de sus ingresos en efectivo a raíz de la crisis

financiera global, paga a Venezuela parte de su factura petrolera con servicios de unos 40.000 médicos y otros profesionales.

El intercambio comercial entre ambas naciones fue de 5.283 millones de dólares en el 2008.

Los acuerdos del sábado son el preámbulo de una cumbre el domingo y lunes de la Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (ALBA), creada hace cinco años por Chávez y el ex presidente cubano Fidel Castro para contrarrestar la influencia de Estados Unidos en la región. Chávez contó que se reunió más temprano el sábado con Fidel Castro, apartado del poder y la vida pública desde que enfermó a mediados del 2006 y a quien considera como un mentor ideológico. “Fidel me acaba de decir (...) si la revolución bolivariana se deteriorara o fracasara o se derrumbara, todo este continente caería de nuevo en manos del imperio yanqui”, relató el mandatario.

El presidente venezolano dijo que al final de su reunión, el líder cubano de 83 años lo acompañó hasta su automóvil. “Me abrió la puerta y me dijo, ya. Y yo le dije móntate (...) casi me lo traigo, casi me lo traigo, casi, casi, casi (...) casi se monta, porque en los ojos se le vió”, dijo Chávez. □

Presidente dominicano: se posterga reunión Zelaya-Lobo

SANTO DOMINGO (AP) - El mandatario dominicano Leonel Fernández anunció el domingo que se postergó la eventual reunión prevista en Santo Domingo para el lunes entre el presidente derrocado de Honduras Manuel Zelaya y el candidato electo de esa nación, Porfirio Lobo.

“La conversación, que se iniciaría con la llegada este domingo del presidente Zelaya y el lunes de Lobo, tendrá que ser postergada hasta tanto el gobierno de facto cree las condiciones para que el presidente Zelaya salga a sostener ese diálogo, como es su deseo”, indicó la Presidencia en un comunicado.

El gobierno de facto hondureño no ha concedido el salvoconducto para que Zelaya pueda salir de su país. “Esa voluntad de iniciar el diálogo esta semana ha sido reiterada al presidente Fernández tanto por el presidente Zelaya como por el candidato electo, pero el gobierno de facto insiste en condicionar la salida de Zelaya para que salga de la embajada de Brasil como asilado político”, informó el gobierno dominicano en un comunicado.

En Cuba, donde sesiona una Cumbre de mandatarios de la Alternativa Bolivariana para las Américas (ALBA), la canciller del gobierno de Zelaya, Patricia Rodas no quiso especificar si saldrá o no de la Embajada brasileña en Honduras, pero aseguró que está “dispuesto a todo tipo de acción y el sacrificio que haga falta” para que no se pierda “la esperanza democrática de nuestros pueblos”.

Sin embargo insistió que la restitución del gobernante y un “pacto social” serán las únicas alternativas para salir de la crisis provocada por el golpe de Estado.

“Las dictaduras no se resuelven con elecciones guiadas por un dictador”, dijo la funcionaria al indicar que los países del ALBA se aprestaban a debatir sobre la situación en su país.

Cuatro presidentes (Hugo Chávez de Venezuela, Daniel Ortega de Nicaragua, Evo Morales de Bolivia y Raúl Castro de Cuba) se encuentran en esta Cumbre. El mecanismo cuenta con nueve miembros y todos tienen delegaciones de alto rango en este foro. □

Estrenan filme sobre secuestro y fuga de ex canciller colombiano

BOGOTÁ (AP) - El ex ministro Fernando Araújo quien estuvo secuestrado por la guerrilla durante seis años, aseguró el domingo que permitió que su historia fuera llevada a la televisión “para que el mundo conozca cuál es la historia del secuestro en Colombia”.

El documental “Correr o morir”, de 90 minutos, narra el secuestro de Araújo en diciembre de 2000 en Cartagena, 650 kilómetros al noroeste de Bogotá, y cómo se fugó el 31 de diciembre de 2006 en una región montañosa del norte del país donde estuvo cautivo de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, FARC.

Araújo caminó y corrió durante seis días por la selva y finalmente logró llegar hasta un puesto militar. Según Araújo, de 54 años, ex canciller del presidente Alvaro Uribe, otro aspecto clave del docudrama “es mostrar cómo el secuestro no sólo afecta al secuestrado sino también a sus familiares”. □

Elecciones en Chile

Candidato opositor aventaja por 12 puntos a oficialista

SANTIAGO DE CHILE (AP)

- El candidato de la oposición derechista, Sebastián Piñera, encabezó los primeros cómputos de la elección presidencial del domingo, seguido del abanderado oficialista, el ex presidente Eduardo Frei.

Piñera, 60 años, un economista con un doctorado en Harvard y que postula por segunda vez consecutiva a la presidencia, obtuvo un 44,67%, en el primer conteo oficial, del 12,64% de la votación divulgado por el subsecretario del Interior, Patricio Rosende. Frei, un ingeniero civil de 67

años, sigue más atrás con un 32,08%.

El discolo diputado Marco Enríquez-Ominami, obtiene un 17,78%, y el ex socialista Jorge Arrate, que representa a una coalición liderada por los comunistas, recibió un 5,45%.

Enríquez-Ominami, 36 años, abandonó el Partido Socialista en junio último porque le prohibieron participar en las primarias que se disputaron en sólo una de las 15 regiones del país, y que convirtieron a Frei en el abanderado oficialista.

La aventura electoral de Enríquez-Ominami, hijo de

un líder guerrillero muerto en un enfrentamiento con las fuerzas represivas de la pasada dictadura y que vivió en París desde los cinco meses a los 13 años, restó votos tanto a Piñera como a Frei, pero especialmente al postulante oficialista.

Las encuestas y los analistas pronostican que ningún candidato obtendrá el 50% más uno de los sufragios para ganar en primera vuelta, por lo que el balotaje se realizará el 17 de enero entre los dos candidatos que obtengan las dos primeras mayorías. □



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El candidato presidencial de la oposición derechista en Chile, Sebastián Piñera, levanta su voto antes de depositarlo en una urna al iniciarse las elecciones generales, en Santiago, el domingo 13 de diciembre de 2009. (Foto AP/Roberto Candia)

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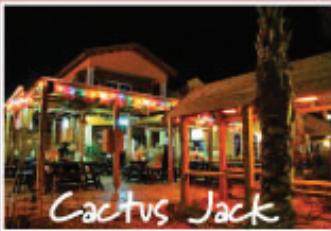
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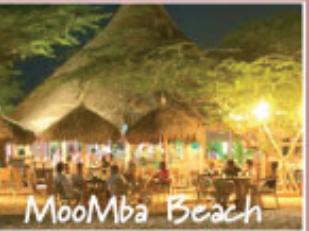
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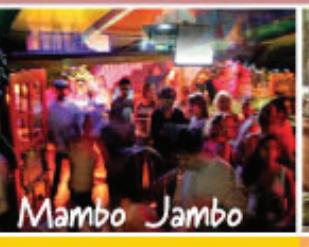
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Sopranos Piano Bar



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